

# The 50th International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT)

## „ELEVATING DIPLOMATIC SUCCESS: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF COMPETENCIES“

8 – 10 October 2024, Budva, Montenegro

### SUMMARY

The 50th jubilee of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT) was held in Budva (Bečići), Montenegro from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024, marking an important milestone for the Forum. For the first time, this important gathering took place in the Western Balkans, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and broadening the geographical reach of global diplomatic education dialogue.

The event brought together more than 80 representatives from 42 delegations from all over the world, including representatives of diplomatic academies, international organizations, and institutions engaged in the professional development of diplomats. The Forum provided a valuable platform for exchanging ideas, strengthening networks, and exploring current and future priorities in diplomatic training. Through open and diverse dialogue, it reaffirmed the relevance of multilateral cooperation in responding to complex global challenges.

Participants engaged in a high-quality program that addressed key themes in modern diplomacy, including the development of essential competencies for diplomats, the use of digital tools in training, and the evolving skillsets required for navigating today's international environment. Special attention was given to competency driven succession planning, leadership development, institutional knowledge transfer, the importance of curricula development and adapting training programs to new global realities.

The Forum facilitated not only thematic discussions but also meaningful bilateral meetings and the creation of new partnerships. A particularly noteworthy moment was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Diplomatic Academies of Peru and Montenegro, symbolizing continued collaboration and the strengthening of diplomatic and professional ties ahead of the next IFDT in Peru.

By encouraging the exchange of best practices, fostering innovation in training methodologies, and offering space for direct engagement among peers, the 50<sup>th</sup> IFDT continued to play a critical role in shaping the future of diplomatic education. As noted by one of the participants, this year's Forum represented a "Synergy of professionalism, relevance, and friendliness. This spirit of collaboration and mutual learning — supported by the excellent organization and hospitality of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro - is what continues to make the IFDT a leading platform for advancing diplomatic training and fostering international understanding".

## SESSIONS OVERVIEW

Wednesday, 9 October 2024

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### OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony featured addresses by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs **Ervin Ibrahimović**, Director of the Vienna Diplomatic Academy and IFDT Co-Chair **Emil Brix**, Director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University and IFDT Co-Chair **Barbara Bodine**, and UNDP Resident Representative in Montenegro **Ekaterina Paniklova**.

Minister Ibrahimović expressed satisfaction that Montenegro was hosting the jubilee 50th IFDT, noting that the presence of more than 80 representatives of diplomatic academies from over 40 countries was a testament to the commitment and shared efforts to advance diplomatic activity through the strengthening of knowledge, skills, and capabilities. “At a time when challenges know no borders, the role of diplomacy is of crucial importance for preserving peace and stability in the world. In today’s dynamic environment, diplomats are expected to be more than representatives of their states. They are bridge-builders among nations, negotiators in times of crisis, and strategists confronting challenges that transcend national boundaries,” said the Minister, underlining that successful diplomacy is needed today more than ever.

Director Brix emphasized that diplomatic training must continuously adapt to new geopolitical realities in order to respond effectively to the challenges of modern diplomacy. Highlighting the importance of the Forum being held for the first time in a Western Balkan country. Brix welcomed Montenegro’s commitment to this important topic and conveyed support for its European integration path.

Director Bodine underlined that the Forum recognizes the critical role of diplomacy in addressing today’s complex global challenges. She stressed that the complexity of the world requires the most educated and motivated diplomats and underscored the importance of strengthening their knowledge, skills, and professional capacities. “Diplomats and diplomacy are indispensable,” Bodine emphasized .

UNDP Resident Representative Paniklova remarked that modern diplomacy goes beyond experience or traditional skills and requires strategic mastery of competencies aligned with new global realities. “We are at a critical juncture where traditional diplomatic methods intertwine with urgent global challenges, such as climate change, digital transformation, economic inequality, and geopolitical shifts. To address these issues effectively, diplomats must be educated, flexible, equipped with adaptable leadership and intercultural communication skills, proficient in the use of data and technology – and much more.” She recalled that Montenegro, through longstanding cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP, has for 17 years been bringing together young diplomats – future leaders – providing them with a platform to learn, exchange experiences, and build lasting mutual connections.

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## MASTERING DIPLOMATIC COMPETENCIES FOR AN EVER – CHANGING WORLD

The keynote presentation centered on the development and mastery of essential diplomatic competencies, highlighting both timeless principles and modern skills required for diplomats to effectively address the complexities of today’s rapidly evolving international landscape.

This session’s keynote address was delivered by Ambassador **Wolfgang Ischinger**, President of the Munich Security Conference Foundation Council and distinguished German diplomat with over four decades of experience. Ambassador Ischinger shared ten core lessons for cultivating essential diplomatic competencies - offering participants valuable insights drawn from his extensive career. These included principles such as understanding both one’s own identity and the interests of those one represents, thinking strategically in advance, enhancing the ability to listen attentively, and comprehensively appreciating the perspectives of other parties. Ambassador Ischinger also stressed the importance of mastering modern diplomatic challenges, such as navigating hybrid threats and disinformation, and how diplomats must position themselves not just as problem identifiers, but as solution providers. He underscored the necessity of defining one’s mission in terms of influence rather than authority and embracing calculated risks as part of effective diplomacy. One of the key takeaways from his address was the importance of maintaining optimism in the face of adversity, as well as building and sustaining trust - which he referred to as “the currency of diplomacy.”

Through these discussions, Ambassador Ischinger reinforced the idea that successful diplomacy requires a combination of analytical acumen, resilience, and the ability to foster trust and cooperation across different cultural and political landscapes.

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## UNPACKING COMPETENCIES, EQUIPPING PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS

In a rapidly evolving global landscape, how can diplomats be best prepared to meet current and future challenges? This question framed the panel discussion “Unpacking Competencies, Equipping People for Success”, moderated by **Jérôme L'host**, which brought together respective heads of diplomatic academies and other training institutions such as **Federica Mogherini** (College of Europe), **Julio Hernán Garro Galvez** (Peru), **Sh. Muneera Khalifa Hamad Al Khalifa** (Bahrain), **Tanja Mihaylova** (Bulgaria), **Wang Shiting** (China), as well as guest speaker **Carlo Borghini**, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Executive Management.

The discussion highlighted that diplomatic training must be both context-sensitive and globally adaptable, combining national priorities with shared international standards. A multidimensional approach emerged as essential - one that integrates academic knowledge, management and negotiation skills, intercultural understanding, and ethical responsibility with real-world practice. The panel also pointed to the growing importance of digital diplomacy, cybersecurity, and technological innovation, alongside traditional diplomatic competencies.

At the same time, the conversation stressed the need to strike a balance between generalist and specialist training, ensuring diplomats possess both a broad grasp of global affairs and in-depth expertise in selected areas. An important challenge identified was the difficulty of measuring

training effectiveness, particularly when it comes to intangible outcomes such as cultural awareness, personal integrity, and adaptability.

The key takeaway of the panel was that training programs must remain flexible, regularly updated, and anchored in practice to meet the demands of an evolving diplomatic landscape, and to remain effective they must evolve as a multidimensional process - uniting theory and practice, traditional and emerging competencies, and national and international perspectives - with practical experience and adaptability at their core.

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## COMPETENCE MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT

How can diplomatic training be designed to equip diplomats with the right skills at every stage of their careers? This question guided the workshop on “Competence Management and Curricula Development,” led by the Clingendal Academy Team - **Ron Ton**, Director and **Adriaan Zondag**, Head of Programme Diplomacy. The session examined the practical application of competency-based training, focusing on identifying essential skills, defining target groups, and selecting effective methods for strengthening diplomatic capacities. Training was emphasized as a continuous process throughout a diplomat’s career, from entry-level to senior leadership.

Key areas highlighted included interpersonal communication, leadership, organizational skills, cultural engagement, crisis management, and multilateral cooperation. Participants took part in group exercises to prioritize competencies and explore the challenges of assessing them in practice. This interactive format underscored the need for both qualitative and quantitative approaches when evaluating diplomatic performance.

The key takeaway of the session was that competency-based training must be an ongoing, adaptive process that combines technical expertise with cross-cultural, organizational, and leadership skills, ensuring diplomats are prepared to manage the growing complexities of international relations.

Thursday, 10 October 2024

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## BUILDING FUTURE LEADERS – COMPETENCY – DRIVEN SUCCESSION PLANNING

How can diplomatic services best prepare the next generation of leaders and ensure smooth transitions in leadership roles? This question framed the panel on “Building Future Leaders – Competency Driven Succession Planning,” moderated by **Maria Edera Spadoni** from UNITAR, which brought together respective directors of diplomatic academies such as **Marina Jovičević** (Serbia), **Abdulaziz Al-Horr** (Qatar), **Geoffrey Wiseman** (USA), **Didier Le Bret** (France), and **Mohammad Kurniadi Koba** (Indonesia).

Discussions highlighted several interlinked priorities. Retaining top talent emerged as a central concern, with emphasis placed on creating professional environments that reward commitment and

provide clear career pathways. The importance of mid-career education was strongly underlined, with participants noting that diplomats need opportunities to refresh and broaden their skills as they progress. Experience outside of the foreign service - whether in business, academia, technology, or international organizations - was viewed as highly valuable for broadening perspectives, sharpening leadership skills, and enhancing adaptability.

The debate also examined the risks of overly rigid or standardized competency frameworks. While structure and coherence in training are necessary, panelists warned that an inflexible approach could produce uniformity at the expense of creativity, resilience, and innovation. Instead, a more nuanced model was seen as preferable - one that recognizes the strengths of diverse backgrounds and allows diplomats to develop leadership styles adapted to their own capacities and the specific contexts of their assignments.

Beyond technical competencies, personal qualities were repeatedly emphasized. Attributes such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and ethical responsibility were described as indispensable for effective leadership. Diplomatic institutions were encouraged to place greater weight on these human dimensions, ensuring that future leaders not only possess technical expertise but also the integrity, judgment, and empathy needed to navigate an increasingly complex and fragmented international system.

The key takeaway was that building future diplomatic leaders requires a flexible and multifaceted approach that blends structured training with diverse career experiences, and that places equal importance on professional competencies and the cultivation of personal integrity, resilience, and ethical responsibility.

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## DIPLOMATIC BAZAAR

The traditional and highly anticipated segment of the Forum, the Bazaar provided a dynamic platform for training institutions to showcase their innovative programs, achievements, and contributions to the field of diplomatic education. The Bazaar offered a unique opportunity for institution representatives to engage directly with participants, exchange insights, and highlight the evolving nature of diplomatic training.

The institutions represented were the **Fletcher School at Tufts**, **UNITAR**, the **Geneva Centre for Security Policy**, the **UAE's Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy**, and the **Hungarian Diplomatic Academy**. Each institution presented a variety of specialized training programs designed to meet the diverse needs of diplomats, with many emphasizing client-tailored approaches to address specific regional, geopolitical, and thematic challenges.

One notable trend emerging from the Bazaar was the increasing interest in cybersecurity training. With the growing importance of digital security in modern diplomacy, several institutions highlighted the development of programs that aim to equip diplomats with the necessary skills to navigate the complex landscape of cyber threats, digital diplomacy, and the protection of sensitive information.

The Bazaar served not only as a showcase of current training programs but also as a forum for institutions to explore new partnerships and collaborations. By engaging in this exchange, participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of the range of educational offerings available and discuss emerging trends in diplomatic training.

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## HOW TO USE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DIPLOMATIC TRAINING

How can artificial intelligence be integrated into diplomatic training to prepare diplomats for the challenges of a digital age? This guiding question shaped the final workshop of the Forum, facilitated by the DiploFoundation team, including **Jovan Kurbalija**, Executive Director, **Andrej Škrinjarić**, Director of Education and Training, and **Dragana Markovski**, Deputy Director of Education and Training. The session explored the transformative potential of AI in diplomacy, with particular emphasis on its ability to streamline reporting, analyze large volumes of data, and optimize training processes.

During the session, participants had the opportunity to explore how AI can be harnessed to improve efficiency in diplomatic work, including the use of AI-powered systems for drafting reports and analyzing large volumes of data. One of the highlights was a live demonstration of an AI system designed to summarize discussions in real-time, providing participants with an overview of how such technology can support diplomats in quickly processing and disseminating key information from meetings and negotiations.

The session also sparked discussions about the broader implications of AI in diplomacy, including the need to ensure that technological advancements are used responsibly and in alignment with ethical standards.

This workshop marked a forward-looking conclusion to the Forum, showcasing how innovative technologies like AI are composed to revolutionize diplomatic practices and prepare diplomats for the challenges of a rapidly evolving global landscape. It underscored the importance of integrating technology into diplomatic training to ensure that future diplomats are equipped with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

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## STUDY VISIT TO THE OLD ROYAL CAPITAL CETINJE AND KOTOR BAY

As part of the Forum's program, participants had the opportunity to experience Montenegro's rich historical and cultural heritage through a study visit to the Old Royal Capital Cetinje and the Kotor Bay area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This visit provided a deeper understanding of the country's historical context, cultural identity, and its longstanding tradition of diplomacy.

In Cetinje, participants explored key landmarks including the historic Royal Palace and the Cetinje Monastery, gaining insights into Montenegro's statehood traditions and the evolution of its

diplomatic relations. The visit underscored the significance of heritage and history in shaping national diplomatic narratives and identity.

The journey from Cetinje to Kotor included a ride on the newly built cable car, offering participants spectacular panoramic views of the Montenegrin mountains and coastline.

The tour continued to Kotor Bay, known for its stunning natural beauty and centuries-old coastal towns. In Kotor, participants discovered the layered history of international interactions and cultural exchange that shaped the region, from Venetian influences to maritime diplomacy. The site visits highlighted how geography and cultural diversity have historically positioned Montenegro as a bridge between civilizations.

The study visit offered an invaluable cultural dimension to the Forum, reminding participants that diplomacy is not only about political and strategic engagement but also about understanding and respecting the historical and cultural foundations of nations. It provided an inspiring conclusion to the event, strengthening personal connections among participants and enriching the overall Forum experience.

**CONCLUSION**

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The 50th International Forum on Diplomatic Training in Montenegro successfully combined substantive debates on the future of diplomatic competencies with opportunities for knowledge exchange and networking. By addressing themes such as leadership development, competency-driven training, and the role of technology in diplomacy, the Forum reaffirmed its role as a unique platform for shaping global diplomatic education. The event not only strengthened professional ties and fostered new partnerships but also underscored Montenegro’s commitment to promoting dialogue, inclusivity, and innovation in international diplomacy.

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