



INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY CENTER FIRST ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Executive Summary Report

25 January 2023

The IAI Science Diplomacy Center (SDC) Advisory Board held its first in-person board meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 11 to 13 November 2022. The SDC Advisory Board currently consists of 11 professionals from the Americas and abroad, including IAI Parties, IAI Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)/ Science-Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) members, science diplomacy experts, and representatives from policy, academia, and the private sector. The full list of Advisory Board members can be found here: <https://www.iai.int/en/post/detail/Science-Diplomacy-Center-Advisory-Board-Meeting>

The Meeting had the attendance of sixteen (16) professionals including the Advisory Board members, the Center's Senior Advisor, the IAI Directorate, and representatives from the Belmont Forum.

The main goals of the IAI Science Diplomacy Center Advisory Board Meeting were to:

- Co-develop the Center's implementation plan by defining its mission, vision, goals and objectives, as well as advising on the design and development of the Center's programs and activities, including the relevant content, training materials and timeline for building science diplomacy capacities in the region.
- Explore sustainable funding options and strategies to secure resources for the Center's medium and long-term operation.
- Explore ways of strengthening partnerships and collaborations with other key national and international organizations to support the SDC and its programs.
- Provide guidance, insight and ideas on strengthening diplomatic relations across the Americas in the area of global change.

This report provides a high-level summary of the Meeting's major discussion items, activities, recommendations and outputs under areas of capacity building, strategic initiatives, science diplomacy themes, and sustainable approaches to funding.

The IAI has a broad engagement with decision-makers and policy makers, a robust science community/network, and has generated a wealth of scientific knowledge and training methodologies and approaches in relation to transdisciplinary research in global change on topics such as climate change, oceans, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and water resources, among others. However, there remains a need to strengthen the science-policy interface among the 19 member Parties in the Americas; providing policy makers with sound scientific information to support their decision-making processes to address the complex challenges facing the region that cannot be solved by a single country due to limited scientific, technological, financial, human, institutional and other resources. There is a need for innovative science diplomacy instruments and mechanisms that may not necessarily reflect standard examples of the Global North, but instead are suited to the context of the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. Hence, there is an opportunity for the Science Diplomacy Center to be an instrument that enables and facilitates this process, particularly targeting policy and decision-makers.

In discussing the three pillars (science for diplomacy, diplomacy for science, and science in diplomacy) under which the Center will operate, the SDC's vision, mission, and goals were drafted:

Vision: The Science Diplomacy Center shall contribute to the maintenance of a peaceful and sustainable Americas through innovative transdisciplinary collaborations to address the region's shared challenges and safeguard the livelihoods and well-being of future generations and the planet.

Mission: The Center shall enhance the capacity of Parties to meet the objectives of the IAI Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals by developing a science diplomacy knowledge hub and open, just, and equitable programs and activities for the Americas to meet the challenges of global change.

Goals:

1. Strengthen the interface between science and policy
2. Build and sustain capacity
 - a. Regional training
 - b. Identify and foster a skill set necessary to develop an effective science diplomacy community
3. Develop a science diplomacy knowledge hub
 - a. Provision of Science Diplomacy information
4. Convene relevant communities
5. Raise awareness of current and emerging global change issues
6. Facilitate regional and international collaboration
7. Foster strategic communication
8. Promote open, just, and equitable science
9. Facilitate inclusion of traditional knowledge, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities with prior and informed consent

Summary Comments and Recommendations:

- One of the SDC's goals is to serve as a platform or hub for countries to share their experiences in using scientific knowledge and information to support policies. Hence, the IAI SDC aims at facilitating the exchange of information and best practices among countries.
- The IAI has an established capacity-building program, and diverse partners from the scientific research and policy communities, private sector, and civil society across the Americas in the area of climate, health, biodiversity conservation and water security. These are also priority areas for the region, therefore it is recommended that the SDC strengthens synergies with these existing programs.
- In order for activities to be targeted, executed in a short period of time, and achievable, the initial implementation of initiatives under the SDC should focus on a common ground among Parties. Based on the IAI's Regional Assessment, 'Climate Action' was identified as a local and regional priority among Parties. Possible sub-focus areas under 'Climate Action' may be food security, ocean, and disaster risk reduction and management.
- The Center should develop a Strategic Communication Plan (SCP) for both internal and external audiences. This includes aligning topics with the results of the IAI's Regional Assessment, as well as developing a sustainable internal mechanism and/or capacity to create region-specific and/or country-specific communication materials (e.g., policy briefs, one-page synthesis of scientific information, etc.) to be distributed to Parties and decision-makers. Policy officials and decision-makers require targeted reports that are not laden with scientific jargon, but are understandable, and digestible, as well as locally and regionally relevant. This SCP should also include the use of IAI focal points to ensure that the Center's value is communicated and known, so as to attract engagement of the governments.
- It will be important for the Center to ensure that its initiatives and activities are framed by actionable justice, equity, diversity and inclusivity. Likewise, the Center should be able to track and communicate this progress.
- The Center may consider requesting funds from IAI Associates and Parties through grants, contracts, donations, and/or an endowment fund. A matching fund structure, which is a cost-sharing contribution

to the Center's initiatives, projects, trainings, or activities that will benefit multiple Parties throughout the region may also be considered as an alternative funding strategy.

The SDC Advisory Board meeting also coincided with the IAI Science, Technology and Policy - STeP 'Leadership in Science Diplomacy Workshop,' which was the first in-person meeting of Generation 1 (2020-2022) and Generation 2 (2022-2024) STeP fellows from various regions in the Americas. STeP fellows were given the opportunity to present their group science diplomacy projects to the Board members for feedback. Further discussion on leveraging the STeP Program was also discussed. Some of the main comments and recommendations from this session are listed below.

- There is an opportunity to strengthen and expand the reach of the IAI Science, Technology and Policy (STeP) Fellowship Program through the SDC in order to nurture the expertise that countries require, particularly in the area of science diplomacy. The learning experiences being created by the SDC must be contextualized by and for the region. This aligns well with the science diplomacy (SD) Curriculum being developed by the IAI where context-specific science diplomacy ideas, concepts, experiences and case studies are being generated for the STeP program and for training activities under the SDC.
- The STeP fellows' science diplomacy projects can serve as a model or resource for how science diplomacy can deliver tangible results quickly. The strategic impact of STeP is for the policy host institutions to recognize the value of early career researchers in strengthening the human and institutional capacities, as well as strengthening the science-policy interface.
- In establishing synergies with the STeP program, the Center may need to consider elements of training, education and mentorship. Therefore, collaborating with universities to provide training and education may be an opportunity to explore. The mentorship program under the SDC could strengthen synergy with SAC/SPAC members and STeP fellows. The Center's mentorship plan for fellows should also leverage their expertise and experience, as well as ensure that a concerted effort is made in their growth within the policy space, as they expand their knowledge and experience in government processes, documentation, and operations.

Conclusion

The discussions at the SDC first in-person advisory board meeting reiterated the unique position of the IAI and its extensive reach across diverse communities in the Americas. The value to the SDC and its initiatives lies in defining its communication strategies, establishing collaborative partnerships and strengthening synergies between existing programs in the IAI. The contributions and recommendations shared by Advisory Board members will be used to guide the drafting of the Center's Implementation Plan which will detail its activities, timeline, metric for monitoring and evaluation, as well as budgetary allocation. In maintaining the co-creation and co-design process for the Center's initiatives, board members will participate in virtual and in-person meetings to finalize the Implementation Plan which will be submitted for consideration by Parties at its 31st meeting (Panama, 2023).