

Science Diplomacy Center: A regional initiative to foster Science-Policy Dialogue and Collaboration for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Americas

Introduction

The government of Panama hosted the 31st meeting of the IAI Conference of the Parties (CoP 31) between June 21st and 22nd, 2023. The creation of the IAI Science Diplomacy Center, and its initial work plan, was approved by consensus and with a lot of enthusiasm by the CoP, which had the participation of 13 IAI member countries.

As part of meeting, the IAI Directorate hosted a side event of the CoP for the SDC, where the objectives were to present the vision, mission, and goals of the Center, discuss regional case studies on science diplomacy, identify needs in capacity building and processes related to science-policy-diplomacy, and explore how the Center can best support national and regional priorities as identified by Parties. The event was designed to ensure active participation of IAI member states, facilitate dynamic discussions on specific topics related to science diplomacy and the role of the Science Diplomacy Center in the region, allowing for a diverse range of perspectives to be heard. This ensured that member states not only collaboratively designed the Center's initiatives, but also reinforce their ownership and engagement in the SDC's activities.

DAY I

The event began with a welcome by Anna Stewart, IAI Executive Director, and a brief overview of the SDC by Marcella Ohira, IAI Deputy Executive Director and Director of Capacity Building. As the host country of CoP 31, Milagro Mainieri, Director of Innovation and Development, SENACYT Panama shared the country's experience in science diplomacy, including the establishment of the first national science diplomacy strategy in Latin America. Showcasing an example of 'science in diplomacy' Hector Guzman, Marine Biologist, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) shared experience in working with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to shift shipping lanes to protect migratory whale species.

These presentations were then followed by an interactive discussion activity. This co-design session was structured in a rotational format, where the participants were encouraged to move between three stationary stations, each focusing on a specific topic: 1) Institutional mechanisms for scientific diplomacy, 2) Capacity development in science diplomacy, 3) Emerging issues and the Science Diplomacy Knowledge Hub. This format encouraged active participation, facilitated dynamic discussions on each topic, and allowed for a diverse range of perspectives to be heard. Each station was facilitated by a Chair, SAC/SPAC Co-Chair, an IAI Representative and a STeP Fellow.

Station Name	Station Facilitators
Station 1: Institutional mechanisms for scientific diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Milagro Mainieri, Panama Focal Point and Vice chair of IAI Executive Council SAC/SPAC co-chair: Omar Lopez IAI Representative: Kim Portmess STeP Fellow: Rosario Quintero
Station 2: Capacity development in science diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair: Carlos Matsumoto, Brazil Focal Point, MCTI SAC/SPAC co-chair: Carol Franco IAI Representative: Marcella Ohira STeP Fellow: Anne Teresa Birthwright

Station 3: Emerging issues and the Science Diplomacy Knowledge Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Maria Uhle, US Focal Point, NSF USA • SAC/SPAC co-chair: Javier Garcia Garza • IAI Representative: Marcos Regis da Silva • STeP Fellow: Brian Leung
--------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The following summary outputs were recorded:

- 1) **Institutional mechanisms for scientific diplomacy:** Participants discussed the importance of science diplomacy to support regional collaboration (multilateralism) among member states in global environmental change related issues, and the role of the Center to support national strategies, plans, programs and other institutional mechanisms.

Summary Output: The Center can assist to strengthen collaborative learning, identify regional projects and coordinate regional actions, address the spectrum of earth system and planetary boundaries to improve risk management and reliance, build connections to help understand key interfaces between different fields of knowledge, as well as to support countries to build a common position to negotiate climate global priorities and to identify shared economical/financial opportunities. The Center can also build facilitation skills to support the participatory process and conflict resolution among officials, as well as train science communicators (including civil society and local governments) to more visibly explain scientific data from diverse regions and political spaces. These were categorised under four main themes: National Strategic Plans, Regional Strategic Plans, Communications Strategies and Capacity Building.

- 2) **Capacity development in science diplomacy:** Participants discussed the priority capacity-building needs, skills and knowledge in science diplomacy that required further development for government officials in the Americas, particularly Latin America and the Caribbean region, and the potential role of the Center to facilitate these activities.

Summary Output: The Center can support officials to better understand and use scientific data and information into policy and diplomatic strategies and national development plans; support the development and use of policy briefs and position papers for decision-making, develop data visualization capacity and support the curation and access to relevant data repository. It was recommended for the Center to support capacity building in diplomacy, negotiation protocols, procedures, and mechanism, as well as facilitate the strengthening of technical legal expertise in multilateral environments (international law) and knowledge on regulatory impact, including laws pertaining to the environment and human rights. This would assist officials in the diplomatic process of articulating and defending their country's position on a particular topic. Likewise, the Center is encouraged to strengthen the ability of officials to convene key sectors and partners to facilitate multi-sectoral collaboration and build consensus, as well as strengthen capacities in science-policy communication and in scientific diplomacy related to knowledge translation and dissemination. These were categorised under four main themes: Data, Legal Framework, Conflict Resolution and Communication (knowledge translation and dissemination).

- 3) **Emerging issues and the Science Diplomacy Knowledge Hub:** Participants discussed the priority topics and emerging issues in global environmental change and the resources needed in the Center's Knowledge Hub. The discussion also explored the role of the Center and its potential contributions to addressing emerging issues.

Summary Output: The Center was recommended to facilitate dialogue around emerging technology to support global environmental change objectives (Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum, and block-chain). Among the suite of emerging themes and topics suggested, the Center was recommended to consider climate disaster risks & cascading effects, One Health or Planetary Health solutions, pandemic preparedness and global health security, valuing Small Island Developing States (SIDS), indigenous knowledge systems, migration, alleviating poverty, improving conservation and sustainability. The Center was encouraged to facilitate knowledge-sharing spaces that reduce and prevent maladaptation and mis/disinformation, as well as value science-policy tools and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion frameworks. It was also suggested that the Center facilitate co-design skills for researchers and policy makers to work together, as well as to create a platform for national and regional data and information exchange; hosting a database repository with actionable information. These were categorised under four main themes: Emerging Research Themes, Specific Themes, Emerging Educational Challenges, and Resources to Develop.

DAY 2

These summary discussion points of the SDC side event were presented at the CoP by each of the Station Chairs (Milagro Mainieri, Carlos Matsumoto, and Maria Uhle) where the following Decisions were enthusiastically accepted by the member states:

1. *Decision: XXXII/18. The Conference of the Parties approves the creation of the IAI Science Diplomacy Center and its work plan for the first 3 years based on the recommendations of the Center steering committee (Advisory Board).*
2. *Decision: XXXII/19 The Directorate is instructed to develop and implement the activities under the Science Diplomacy Center as appropriate and subject to the availability of external financial resources, and report on its development at future meetings of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. *Decision: XXXII/20. The Parties are encouraged to work with the Science Diplomacy Center steering committee (Advisory Board) and the IAI Directorate in the development and support of the Center programs and activities.*
4. *Decision: XXXII/21. The Parties are encouraged to participate in the programs and activities of the Science Diplomacy Center and contribute to the work of the Center with a view to fostering science policy dialogue and enhancement of collaboration related to global environmental change in the Americas.*