

## DISCUSSION PAPER

# SCIENCE DIPLOMACY: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH COUNCILS AND THE GLOBAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

## Introduction

Scientists have always been at the forefront of international collaboration, and, for centuries, science has been used for international relations purposes around the world. Hence science diplomacy is a new term for an old concept.

Science diplomacy needs to adapt to varying contexts and circumstances. There are today neither commonly accepted guidelines on how to perform science diplomacy nor a precise definition of what the concept describes. However, in 2010, the Royal Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) issued a report describing three forms of science diplomacy: science in diplomacy - informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice; science for diplomacy - using science cooperation to improve diplomatic relations; and diplomacy for science - facilitating international science cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Responsibility for science diplomacy, within any country, is typically shared across institutional structures especially science and foreign ministries. Science diplomacy can aim to: Advance domestic needs; address cross-border or regional interests; tackle global needs and challenges.<sup>2</sup> Science Diplomacy occurs in the respect of all applicable laws and regulations at national and international levels.

Through a series of five regional meetings (October 2017 – January 2018), GRC participants have initiated a reflection about their role as research councils in science diplomacy, about the role of international collaboration amongst research councils in general and collaboration within the GRC in promoting and advancing science diplomacy. This initial phase resulted in the identification of key guiding principles and suggested approaches. The latter was discussed at the seventh GRC Annual Meeting on 14-16 May 2018 in Moscow.

## Principles

### Safeguarding scientific values

Freedom of inquiry, meritocracy, scientific rigor, rationality, recognition of contributions, scientific independence and transparency are critical elements in ensuring the soundness of science. These remain unaltered in the context of science diplomacy.

### Fostering openness

Fostering openness in science is key in overcoming geographical borders, and in yielding benefits that go beyond the scientific research. To the maximum extent practicable, research collaborations, the mobility of experts, access to scholarly content, data sharing, and unconstrained access to knowledge in general should be encouraged.

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Society and AAAS, "New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy" (London: Royal Society, 2010)

<sup>2</sup> P.D. Gluckman, V. Turekian, R.W. Grimes, and T. Kishi, "Science Diplomacy: A Pragmatic Perspective from the Inside," *Science & Diplomacy*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December 2017)

### **Building trust and relationship**

Scientific collaboration can play an important role in building bridges between countries. The science must be sound and open; and in addition the adequate relationships, within and beyond academia, must also be maintained and nurtured over the long-term. In this context, societal and political trust in science as well as trust and adequate communication between scientists and political decision makers and the wider public, is central to science diplomacy.

### **Suggested Approaches**

The remit, mission and portfolio of tools vary strongly among research councils and national research systems. The following are examples of approaches that research councils may find useful to engage in science diplomacy and contribute to fostering the principles above as well as the support of their communities when doing so. Some of these approaches are best pursued independently while others lend themselves to collaborative joint exploration. Discussions at the 2018 GRC Annual Meeting identified approaches that research councils would like to collaborate on and identify possible ways for the GRC to support this, for instance by revisiting this topic in the future.

### **Support approaches**

- **Developing a shared understanding of science diplomacy**  
A shared understanding of science diplomacy is needed. The GRC provides a global platform for its participants to share experience and good practice, compare definitions of science diplomacy they use, and explore how science diplomacy connects to their work as research councils.
- **Expanding capacity to leverage the potential of science diplomacy**  
The GRC encourages participants to enhance their own understanding of science diplomacy through activities, such as lectures, workshops, courses, prizes and collaborations with other actors engaged in science diplomacy. GRC participants can support researcher's training and "*encourage the acquisition of diverse skill sets and outreach activities*" also in the context of science diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> GRC participants could also reward and incentivize science diplomacy related activities.

### **Operational approaches**

- **Supporting science on science diplomacy**  
GRC participants can, within their mandates, support research and innovative thinking in this area. This could include support for research into areas such as: creating the right conditions for scientific evidence to inform bilateral and multilateral negotiations; and impact assessments to bolster the potential of science diplomacy at global, regional and national levels.

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<sup>3</sup> GRC Statement of Principles and Actions for Shaping the Future: Supporting the Next Generation of Researchers (2014)

- **Opening up of schemes**

GRC participants are encouraged to increase access to their research funding schemes to non-national scientists, support researcher mobility and staff exchange, launch joint calls for research projects with international partners, jointly develop large research infrastructures and promote access to facilities in general, where practicable and allowable under statutory authorities. Such an internationalisation not only strengthens national, regional, and global research systems, but can also enable science diplomacy initiatives.

## **Strategic approaches**

- **Framing science diplomacy in the context of shared challenges**

GRC participants should encourage science diplomacy approaches to address shared challenges across borders, or in non-jurisdictionally controlled areas. Such challenges can only be tackled through a holistic approach, and science must play its part in this process. GRC participants are encouraged to increase their collaboration with their national foreign policy apparatus to provide evidence-based advice to related policy developments.