

Health Diplomacy Breakfast Discussion

Berlin, October 13th 2025

On the sidelines of this year's World Health Summit in Berlin, the [Health Diplomacy Institutional Network](#) hosted an interactive Breakfast Meeting to explore the role of health diplomacy in today's evolving global health ecosystem, highlighting opportunities for research and training in the field.

The meeting was moderated by Garry Aslanyan from the University of Toronto, joined by speakers Magda Robalo (the Institute for Global Health and Development in Guinea-Bissau), Ren Minghui (Peking University), Esperanza Martinez (The Australian National University), Teo Yik Ying (National University Singapore) and Anders Nordström (Karolinska Institutet and Stockholm School of Economics).

Real-world insights into today's health diplomacy

The meeting, which gathered around 70 participants, began with an exchange of perspectives on the reality and applications of health diplomacy today. The ongoing turbulence in global health was at the focus, and it was stressed that health challenges in the Global South are closely linked to factors beyond the health sector, such as illicit financial flows and high debt service.

With African leaders demonstrating a clear intention to forge more equitable partnerships and advance health sovereignty, there was a call for adaptive health diplomacy in an evolving global health landscape. There is less of clear leadership in global health diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region. It was noted that the potential obstacles to collective action in the region stemmed from its vastness and diversity, as well as a handful of countries with strong national capacities.

Nonetheless, health diplomacy could help countries find win-win solutions to transnational health challenges. To achieve this, there is a need to strengthen skills in negotiation, effective communication in global fora, and the ability to identify synergies between global and national interests.

Existing training and research opportunities

Several ongoing training and research efforts in health diplomacy were highlighted during the meeting. In particular, the Network's [Training and competency framework](#), featuring five key competencies fundamental for effective performance in health diplomacy worldwide, was presented. The framework, currently under review for publication, supports institutions in designing health diplomacy training programs in a structured yet flexible, context-specific way.

An overview of the [forthcoming Lancet Series on Diplomacy for Health](#) was also provided. The Series involves four international research teams, exploring the new

conceptualization of health diplomacy, perceptions of success in the field, the evolving dynamics between global responsibility and national interests, and possible future developments for health diplomacy.

Reflections and recommendations

The audience also had the chance to learn more about the Network, which currently comprises 38 institutions around the world and welcomes new members working with health diplomacy training programs.

In an open discussion, attendees reflected on approaches to cultivating a community of practice for effective health diplomacy, connecting political science, international relations and public health, and advancing existing health diplomacy practices. During this part of the breakfast meeting, participants underscored the value of using real-world case studies for strengthening diplomatic capacity and inquired about the potential to introduce modules on health diplomacy into undergraduate education.

As closing remarks, the roles of preparedness and awareness in successfully navigating diplomatic processes were described. Being clear on country's national agendas and priorities, as well as position in negotiations, were deemed particularly important. Moreover, it was emphasised that health has the convening power to bring actors from various sectors to the same table, reminding the audience that this is something health diplomacy can leverage, using the key competencies.