

Report //

A Course on Science Diplomacy by AAAS-TWAS 2022

Er Mamta Bhardwaj^{a,*}, Er Rohan Malhotra^b

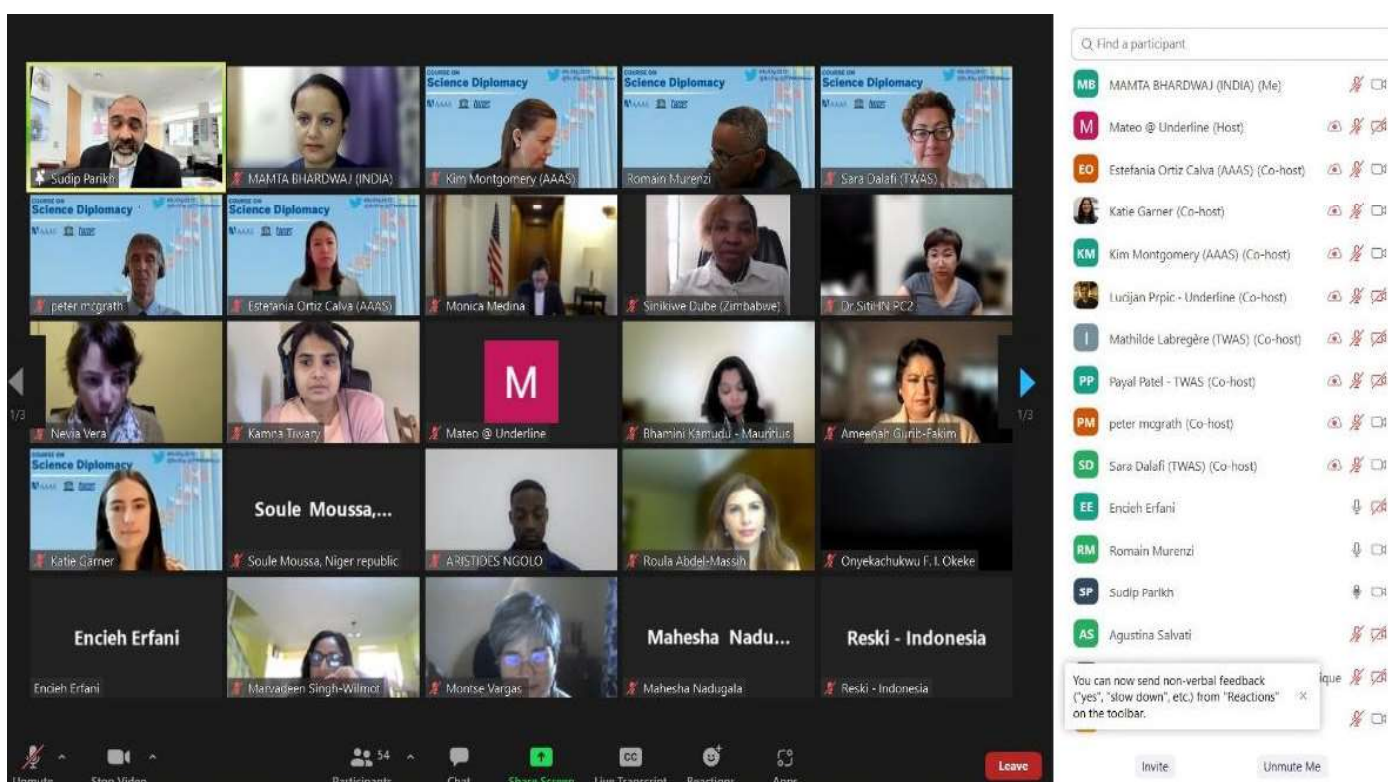
^aSr Scientist C, DST-Centre for Policy Research, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

^bYoung Policy Fellow, Department of Science and Technology, Govt of India

**Corresponding author : mamta.bhardwaj1984@gmail.com*

Introduction

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), United States and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), Italy have partnered since 2011 to organise a week-long summer course at the TWAS headquarters in Trieste, Italy. This was the ninth edition (2022) of the AAAS-TWAS course on Science Diplomacy held virtually from 25 July 2022 to 3 August 2022. For the second year in a row, the organisers experimented with a new format whereby attendees participated in pairs comprising of an early career scientist and a colleague from the diplomatic or policymaking arena. The event was organised on the Zoom platform and Gather Town. The course started with the welcome remarks by **Kim Montgomery**, Director of International Affairs and Science Diplomacy (AAAS), **Romain Murenzi**, Executive Director, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) and **Sudip Parikh**, CEO, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).



Glimpses of Participants on day 1 (Zoom platform)

The platform, namely 'Gather Town', which was deployed for the first time to make the online course more instructional and engaging, was the most intriguing aspect of the course which was developed by Underline. Each participant was instructed to select a distinct 'Avatar,' (To be selected from the list provided by the platform only) so that they are easily identifiable, and not to change it over the entire duration of the course. To familiarise participants with the programme, a science diplomacy quiz competition was conducted during the introductory session on the first day, with questions hidden in various corners of the platform. The participants were expected to congregate at 'Gather Town' to discuss the day's conclusion at the end of the day reflection and upcoming activities with their pairs and fellow participants.



View of Gather Town Platform during the course

This year saw the participation of 50 candidates from various countries like India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, South Africa, Brazil, Malta, Nigeria, Egypt, United States of America, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, West Indies, etc. More than twenty distinguished experts and practitioners provided their invaluable contributions by sharing their expertise and experience throughout the course. On the inaugural day, the Keynote speaker was **Ameenah Gurib-Fakim**, former president of Mauritius, and she spoke on the crucial issues of sustainable growth and climate change in South Asia and Latin America. She further added that to meet the development challenges, the nations must bridge the gap between research and policymaking, educating and attracting the youth to research and development.

The prominent speakers of the entire course were **Maurizio Bona**, former Senior Advisor, Relations with Parliaments and Science for Policy, CERN, **Margaret Donoghue**, Country Head US at CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), Australia, **Ronit Praver**, Director Science and Innovation Network, Eastern USA, British Consulate General in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, **James Hammond**, Director, Mount Paektu Research Centre; Assistant Dean, Recruitment and Retention, School of Science, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London, **Exequiel Ezcurra**, winner of 2020 AAAS Award for Science Diplomacy; professor at University of California Riverside, former Director of the University of California Institute for Mexico and the United States, **Jan Marco Müller**, Coordinator for Science Diplomacy at DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission, **Yousuf Al-Bulushi**, Science Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Oman, **Soledad Quiroz Valenzuela**, Vice President for Public Policy, International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA), etc.

Through the talks and plenary sessions, the speakers and moderators encouraged bilateral and multilateral collaborations between the countries to address the real challenges such as climate change,

educations system, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global warming, health sector, misinformation and disinformation in science, agriculture, scientific advice in environmental issue, scientific and research infrastructure, a career in science diplomacy, and through science diplomacy. Another interesting fact of this year's course was the interaction with the last (2021) year alumnus of the course. The main objective of the discussion was to promote interaction between the pairs with previous course alumni to discuss diverse topics related to science diplomacy from their region's perspectives.

Learnings from the Course

Some of the learnings and take home from the course are:

- Establishment of centralised science communication offices is the need of the hour in all countries and their interlinking is most crucial for diplomacy through science.
- For awareness and popularisation, science diplomacy modules should be introduced in all domains of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- A dedicated fund should be allocated for science communication and society engagement by respective science agencies of the nations.
- The institutional capacity for science diplomacy must be built to explore and implement science diplomacy initiatives, especially in developing countries.
- The nations with common problems and interests need to collaborate more efficiently, promote technologies, conduct effective policy-level discussions and implementation, nurture scientists, and increase mobility in international funding for noble causes.
- To achieve SDGs, climate change and foster international collaborations and partnerships, the need for highly skilled and trained researchers, collaborative trade, attracting high-value manufacturing and evidence-based policy formulations and implementation are the crucial aspects.
- The prestigious organisations like AAAS and TWAS should organise such events in various countries to promote science for diplomacy and diplomacy for science. This will strengthen the networking and relation between the nations and encourage the science diplomats to collaborate.

This year's course was the second batch for which applications were invited in pairs. This idea of pairs was adopted to promote networking through science diplomacy and encourage them to work in a collaborative mode in future too.