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INNOVATION CENTRE FOR SOUTHERN-SOUTH
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2026

Foundations of Science Diplomacy: A Training Programme for Early and Mid-Career Researchers

21 – 23 JUNE 2026 CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where the boundaries between science, society, and international relations are increasingly interconnected. Many of the most pressing challenges of our time, including climate change, pandemics, food and water security, energy transitions, and the governance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, transcend national borders and require coordinated international responses. These challenges are particularly acute across many regions of the Global South, including Africa, where the impacts of climate change, health crises, and resource pressures are often most deeply felt. These issues are not purely scientific or technical problems. They are also deeply political, social, and diplomatic in nature. Addressing them requires new forms of dialogue that integrate scientific knowledge into the complex processes of policymaking and international cooperation.

Science diplomacy has emerged as an important mechanism at the intersection of science, policy, and international relations. For Africa and the wider Global South, science diplomacy provides an important pathway for strengthening international partnerships, advancing sustainable development priorities, and ensuring that global decision-making reflects diverse perspectives and locally grounded knowledge. It is commonly understood through three interrelated dimensions: science in diplomacy, where scientific evidence informs foreign policy; diplomacy for science, where diplomatic processes facilitate international scientific collaboration; and science for diplomacy, where scientific cooperation contributes to strengthening international relations. In an increasingly interconnected and multipolar world, science diplomacy plays a critical role in ensuring that global decision-making is informed by credible evidence while fostering constructive international partnerships.

Early- and mid-career researchers are often at the forefront of generating knowledge relevant to global and regional policy challenges. Yet many researchers have limited opportunities to understand how policy processes operate, how scientific advice informs international negotiations, or how they themselves can engage effectively at the science policy interface.

In view of the above, the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), New Delhi, in partnership with, the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC), Malaysia, the Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC), South Africa, the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF), South Africa, and the University of Venda, South Africa, announces the organisation of **“Foundations of Science Diplomacy: A Training Programme for Early and Mid-Career Researchers”** during **21-23 June, 2026** in **Cape Town, South Africa**.

The Training Programme seeks to address this gap by providing EMCRs with an introduction to the principles and practice of science diplomacy. Through a combination of lectures, case studies, group discussions, and simulation exercises, participants will explore how scientific knowledge interacts with policy and diplomacy while building connections with peers across Africa who are interested in working at the science-policy interface.

The Untapped Potential and Pressing Need for EMCRs

Early- and mid-career researchers (EMCRs) are the engines of scientific discovery and innovation. They are at the forefront of generating the very knowledge required to tackle the global sustainability challenges outlined above. Their passion, expertise, and fresh perspectives position them as potentially powerful agents of change. However, a significant gap exists between the production of scientific knowledge and its effective use in policy and diplomatic arenas. EMCRs, while experts in their fields, often lack:

- **The "Know-What":** A foundational understanding of what science diplomacy is, how it operates, and its relevance to their own research.
- **The "Know-Who":** Exposure to the key actors, institutions, and processes - from foreign ministries and science attachés to international organisations like the African Union and UNESCO - that shape the science-policy interface.
- **The "Know-How":** The essential practical skills - such as translating complex science into policy-relevant language, negotiating in multi-stakeholder environments, and building trust across cultural and disciplinary boundaries - needed to operate effectively in diplomatic settings.
- **The "Know-Where":** Awareness of concrete entry points and career pathways to engage in science diplomacy from their current positions, whether within their universities, through national academies, or via international collaborations.

This gap represents a missed opportunity. Without these skills and networks, the insights of brilliant young and emerging researchers may never reach the policymakers who need them most, limiting their potential impact on national and global policy.

Furthermore, the perspectives and needs of the Global South are often underrepresented in mainstream science diplomacy narratives, and decision-making spaces, which have historically been shaped by actors in the Global North. It is therefore critical to empower a new generation of researchers from Africa and the wider Global South to become active contributors and leaders in this space, ensuring that science diplomacy serves the goals of equity, justice, and sustainable development for all.

Collaborative Response and Partnership

Recognising this critical gap and opportunity, this Training Programme has been developed through collaboration among partner institutions working across Africa and the Global South.

The programme is being organised by the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), together with the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC), the Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC), the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF), and the University of Venda (UNIVEN).

This collaboration brings together complementary strengths, including regional leadership, global South-South cooperation platforms, and national research and training capacities. In particular, the involvement of FEAHLIC and South African partners ensures strong regional grounding and alignment with African science-policy priorities.

Through these partnerships and collective effort, the programme brings together institutions from Africa and across the Global South to support a new generation of early- and mid-career

researchers. It will convene a diverse group of participants and equip them with the knowledge, practical skills, and networks needed to engage effectively at the science–policy–diplomacy interface and translate scientific knowledge into policy-relevant insights. In doing so, the programme seeks to foster a community of emerging knowledge brokers who can bridge science, policy, and diplomacy, and contribute to more inclusive and evidence-informed global dialogue.

AIM

To equip early- and mid-career researchers from the Global South with the foundational knowledge, applied skills, and professional networks needed to engage effectively in science diplomacy, contribute to evidence-informed decision-making, and strengthen international and regional scientific cooperation.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Training Programme:

- **Introduce the fundamentals of science diplomacy**
Equip EMCRs with a clear understanding of key concepts, models, and frameworks of science diplomacy, including its relevance to global and regional challenges.
- **Develop awareness of the science–policy–diplomacy interface**
Enable EMCRs to identify how their research and expertise can contribute to policy processes, international cooperation, and societal impact.
- **Build essential skills for science diplomacy practice**
Strengthen EMCRs’ abilities in communication, negotiation, intercultural competence, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Apply science diplomacy concepts to real-world scenarios**
Provide opportunities through case studies and simulations for participants to practice translating research into policy advice and collaborative solutions.
- **Foster regional and global perspectives**
Encourage EMCRs to explore national, regional, and global entry points for science diplomacy, with particular attention to the needs and opportunities of the Global South.
- **Encourage career integration and networking**
Support EMCRs in developing personal action plans to integrate science diplomacy into their professional trajectories, while building connections with peers for future collaboration.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this Training Programme, participants will be able to:

1. **Define and explain the key concepts, models, and importance of science diplomacy** in addressing global and regional challenges.
2. **Recognise and describe the key actors, institutions, and processes** involved in science diplomacy at national, regional, and global levels.

3. **Analyse the perspectives, challenges, and opportunities for science diplomacy** in and for the Global South.
4. **Communicate scientific knowledge effectively to non-scientific audiences**, including policymakers and diplomats.
5. **Apply science diplomacy concepts in practice**, including through negotiation and consensus building in simulated policy scenarios.
6. **Identify opportunities to engage in science diplomacy** within their own research, institutions, and regional contexts.
7. **Develop a personal action plan** to integrate science diplomacy into their career pathways and professional activities.
8. **Build peer connections and contribute to a growing network of EMCRs** interested in science diplomacy and collaborative engagement.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The Training Programme is expected to strengthen science diplomacy awareness and capacity among early and mid-career researchers from Africa and the Global South. Participants will develop practical skills in communicating science for policy, negotiating across disciplines and sectors, and engaging with international cooperation mechanisms. It will also foster a growing network of emerging researchers committed to advancing science diplomacy and evidence informed decision making in their respective countries and institutions.

IMPORTANT DATES

Activity	Dates
Submission of Application Starts	20 April, 2026
Last Date for Submission of Applications along with Abstract of Paper/Country Status Report	20 May, 2026
Foundations of Science Diplomacy: A Training Programme for Early and Mid-Career Researchers	21-23 June, 2026

TRAINING APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The Training Programme adopts a participant-centred and practice-oriented learning approach designed to move beyond lecture-based instruction. It combines conceptual understanding with applied learning to ensure that participants not only grasp the principles of science diplomacy but also develop the skills needed to engage effectively at the science policy interface.

The methodology is built around five complementary elements:

1. Foundational learning through interactive lectures

Short expert-led sessions introduce the key concepts, models and frameworks of science diplomacy, including the three pillars of science diplomacy and perspectives

from the Global South. These sessions establish a shared conceptual foundation while encouraging discussion and critical reflection.

2. Case-based learning and facilitated group analysis

Participants work in small groups to analyse real-world science diplomacy cases. Through guided discussion, they explore successes, challenges and trade-offs, identify stakeholders and interests, and examine how scientific evidence interacts with political and institutional dynamics.

3. Skills development through practical exercises

Hands on exercises strengthen participants' abilities to translate research into policy relevant insights. Activities include communicating science to non-scientific audiences, structuring policy messages, and preparing for negotiation and stakeholder engagement.

4. Simulation based learning

A half day immersive negotiation simulation places participants in the roles of different actors negotiating a transboundary scientific or policy agreement. This exercise allows participants to practice communication, negotiation and consensus building in a realistic multi stakeholder environment.

5. Reflection and action planning

The programme concludes with guided reflection and the development of a Personal Science Diplomacy Action Plan. Participants identify opportunities to apply science diplomacy within their own work and receive peer feedback to refine their plans and strengthen future collaboration.

The programme also emphasises peer learning across countries of Africa and the wider Global South, enabling participants to share experiences, policy challenges, and approaches to science diplomacy within diverse national contexts.

LANGUAGE

The Training Programme will be delivered in *English only*.

ORGANISERS

Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre)

The Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre) is an Inter-Governmental Organisation with a Membership of 47 countries spread over Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The Centre was set-up in 1989 in New Delhi, India based on the decisions taken during various NAM Summits and is mandated to undertake a variety of programmes, including organization of international workshops, training programmes/workshops and implementation of multilateral collaborative S&T projects. It also offers short-term fellowship programmes to scientists and researchers from developing countries in association with the Centres of Excellence in various countries. The Centre also brings out technical books, monographs and other scientific publications in different S&T subjects of interest to developing countries. The Centre's activities provide an opportunity for scientist-to-scientist contact and interactions; familiarizing



participants on the latest developments and techniques in the subject areas; identification of the requirements of training and expert assistance; locating technologies for transfer between the Members and other developing countries and dissemination of S&T information etc. In addition, the Centre encourages Academic-R&D-Industry interactions in the developing countries through its "NAM S&T-Industry Network". The Centre is giving special focus on helping the NAM S&T Centre Member Countries in their capacity building to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals – 2030. More details about the Centre are available at www.namstct.org

International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC)

The International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC) is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre hosted by the Malaysian Government since 2008. The Centre's



creation follows the Doha Plan of Action, adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China during the Second South Summit in Doha, Qatar, from June 12-16, 2005. The Summit urged UNESCO to develop and implement a programme for South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology, aiming to facilitate the integration of a developmental approach into national science, technology, and innovation policies; build capacity in science and technology by providing policy advice and exchanging experiences and best practices; create a problem-solving network of Centres of Excellence in developing countries; and support the exchange of students, researchers, scientists, and technologists among developing countries. ISTIC acts as an international platform offering sustainable programmes and services, producing holistic talents towards institutional excellence, and augmenting sustainable development for South-South Cooperation. Details of ISTIC are available at www.istic-unesco.org

Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC)

The Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC) is a key component of the Future Earth Africa Hub, providing strategic, operational, and scientific leadership to advance sustainability science across the continent. Co-hosted by Rhodes University and the University of Pretoria, the Centre coordinates research activities,



fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, and supports capacity building among early- and mid-career researchers. It also promotes partnerships with governments, academia, and international stakeholders to ensure African perspectives are integrated into global sustainability efforts and to drive evidence-based solutions for sustainable development.

National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF)

The National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa is a government agency established under the National Research Foundation Act of 1998 to support and advance research, innovation, and human capacity development. It funds research across disciplines, develops scientific expertise, and manages national research facilities. The NRF also promotes public engagement with science and fosters collaboration between academia, industry, and international partners. Through these efforts, it aims to generate knowledge, drive innovation, and contribute to national development and improved quality of life.



University of Venda, South Africa

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) is a public higher education institution located in Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Established in 1982, it has evolved into a comprehensive university offering both academic and career-oriented programmes. UNIVEN focuses on teaching, research, and community engagement, with a strong emphasis on science, technology, and problem-based learning. It aims to produce graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive, while contributing to regional and national development. The university plays a key role in empowering communities and strengthening human capacity across South Africa.



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OUTLINE

DAY 1 – 21 JUNE 2026 (Sunday)
Understanding Science Diplomacy: Concepts, Contexts and Actors
Module 1.1: Foundations of Science Diplomacy
Module 1.2: Science Diplomacy in a Changing World
Module 1.3: Africa and the Global South Science Diplomacy
Module 1.4: Mapping the Science Diplomacy Ecosystem
Signature Exercise
DAY 2 – 22 JUNE 2026 (Monday)
Practising Science Diplomacy: Skills and Negotiation
Module 2.1: Communicating Science for Policy

Module 2.2: Negotiation Skills for Science Diplomacy
Flagship Exercise
Module 2.4: Debrief Session
DAY 3 -23 JUNE 2026 (Tuesday)
Pathways and Leadership in Science Diplomacy
Module 3.1: Science Diplomacy Careers and Pathways
Module 3.2: Policy Brief Challenge
Module 3.3: Presenting Science to Decision-Makers
Module 3.4: Developing a Personal Science Diplomacy
Module 3.5: Building a Science Diplomacy Community of Practice

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Scientists and experts desirous of participating in the Training Programme, **except those from South Africa**, should submit their applications **electronically** to the Director General, NAM S&T Centre, New Delhi at email: namstcentre@gmail.com as early as possible but latest by **20 May 2026**.

Applicants from South Africa should submit their requests directly to: isticsecretariat@istic-unesco.org with a subject line as "NAM S&T Centre – ISTIC – FEAHLC – NRF – UNIVEN Training Programme for EMCRs 21-23 June 2026".

Following documents must be submitted as e-mail attachments:

- a) Filled in Application Form (Blank form **enclosed**).
- b) An Opinion/Write-up (a short paragraph; in MS Word format) on how the applicant qualifies to participate in the Training Programme.
- c) A Short Biography (to be written in third person; 250-300 words max) highlighting the current engagement, areas of expertise, major achievements, academic qualification and professional experience as succinctly as possible.
- d) An Abstract (about 250-300 words in MS-Word only) of the Paper/Country Status Report.
- e) A copy of relevant pages of valid Passport.

Note: The documents (b), (c) and (d) above must be in **MS-Word format** only; PDF or image files will not be accepted. Hard copies of the Application Form and the above attachments are **NOT REQUIRED** to be submitted.

SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

The programme targets early- and mid-career researchers (EMCRs) from the Global South. EMCRs are defined as individuals within ten years of completing a Ph.D. or possessing equivalent professional experience, who are actively engaged in research, innovation, or science policy activities. At this stage in their careers, researchers are well-positioned to influence both scientific advancement and policy engagement, making them key actors in strengthening the science diplomacy interface across the region.

The selection process will aim to ensure a diverse and interdisciplinary group of researchers with strong potential to apply science diplomacy approaches in their work.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS AN EXCLUSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME. THE FINAL DECISION REGARDING SELECTION WILL BE MADE BY THE TECHNICAL SCREENING COMMITTEE.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Participants will be selected based on the following considerations:

- **Career stage:** Early- and mid-career researchers within ten years of completing a Ph.D. or equivalent professional experience.
- **Relevance of expertise:** Research or professional work related to global or regional challenges such as climate change, health, food systems, water, energy, digital technologies, or other sustainable development priorities.
- **Potential for policy engagement:** Demonstrated interest in, or potential to contribute to, policy processes, governance initiatives, or international scientific collaboration.
- **Commitment to engagement:** Willingness to participate fully in the training and contribute actively to peer learning and collaboration.
- **Gender balance and inclusion:** Recognition will be given to include participation from all genders.

Successful applicants will be electronically informed about their selection. Other details and terms and conditions for the participation of scientists from various countries will be given to the individual candidates on receipt of their applications.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

The financial terms and arrangements for international travel of the foreign participants will be conveyed to individual applicants on receipt of their application and other documents.

LOCAL HOSPITALITY

Local hospitality in Cape Town, including accommodation, meals, and local transport (airport transfers), will be provided to selected international participants by the Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC) from 20 June 2026 (noon) to 24 June 2026 (noon) (i.e. from one day before to one day after the Training Programme).

International airfare for selected participants nominated by the NAM S&T Centre will be supported by the Centre based on the eligibility criteria for travel support applicable to the Member Countries and the Members of the NAM S&T Centre – Industry Network. The decision in regard to travel

support for the NAM S&T Centre nominated applicants will be communicated individually to selected applicants.

Any additional nights or upgrades requested by participants will be at their own expense.

ENTRY FORMALITIES AND IMMIGRATION

Participants of the Training Programme must be in possession of a current passport or any other internationally recognized travel document, which must have a period of validity of at least six months beyond the period of stay in South Africa and must be endorsed for travel to South Africa. Participants should have a valid visa for entry into South Africa. The South African diplomatic mission located in or closest to the country of the participant should be approached for obtaining an entry visa. For a large number of countries, however, online visa application is available. Upon request, the organisers will facilitate the issuance of visa by providing the participants with an official letter of invitation.

Note: The governments/institutions of the selected participants will be required to bear the following costs:

- All expenses in the home country incidental to travel abroad, including expenditure for passport, required medical examinations, vaccinations and miscellaneous expenses such as internal travel to the airport of departure in the home country.
- Salary and other related allowances for the participants during the period of the Training Programme
- Cost of medical insurance to cover the period of participation in the Training Programme.

The organisers of the programme will not assume responsibility for the following expenditures in connection with the participant's attendance in the Training Programme:

- Expenses incurred for any insurance, medical bills or hospitalization fees.
- Compensation in the event of death, disability or illness of participants.
- Loss of personal belongings or compensation for damage caused to them by climatic or other conditions.
- Other costs, including the visa fee, airport taxes, flight cancellation and excess baggage, etc.

VISA FEE AND E-VISA REQUIREMENT

The organizers will not cover the visa fee. The selected participants shall be liable to self-arrange their visa application via the official portal of immigration department of South Africa. However, the organizers will assist in providing the necessary documents required for the visa application.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Weather: June marks the beginning of winter in Cape Town. Highly cold and expected rains, as this is the city's wettest season. Average maximum and minimum temperatures are 18°C and 7°C respectively.

Time Zone: South African Standard Time is +02 hours ahead of GMT.

Currency: The Local Currency is the South African Rand (ZAR); the current exchange rate is

approximately USD \$1 = ~16.81 ZAR.

SECRETARIAT & ENQUIRIES

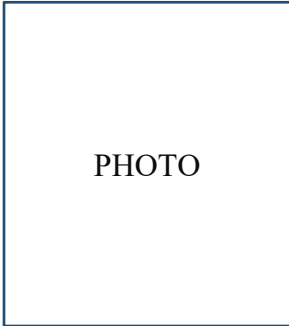
<i>Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries [NAM S&T Centre]</i>	<i>International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO [ISTIC]</i>
<p>Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries (NAM S&T Centre), Core - 6A, 2nd Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi –110003, India Tel: +91-11-24645134, 24644974 E-mail: namstcentre@gmail.com Website: https://www.namstct.org</p>	<p>International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC), 902-4, Jalan Tun Ismail 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Tel: +603-2694 9898 ext. 112 Email: isticsecretariat@istic-unesco.org Website: http://www.istic-unesco.org</p>

**FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY: A TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR
EARLY AND MID-CAREER RESEARCHERS**

**21-23 JUNE, 2026
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA**

APPLICATION FORM

PLEASE TYPE OR USE BLOCK CAPITALS
(NO COLUMN SHOULD BE LEFT BLANK)



SECTION-A

(To be filled in by the Applicant)

- 1 Last Name (Prof. /Dr. /Mr. /Mrs. /Ms.):
(As in Passport)
First Name:
Middle Name:
- 2 Designation (Position held):
- 3 Nationality:
- 4 Date of Birth:
Place of Birth (City)(Country).....
- 5 Passport No:
Place of issue:
Date of Issue: Valid up to:
*(Please **attach** copies of the relevant pages of your Passport)*
- 6 Name of the Parent Institution (Employer).....
Full Address (Office):
Phone: Mobile:
Fax: E-mail:

- 7 Full Address (Home):

 Phone: Mobile:
 Fax: E-mail:
- 8 Educational Qualifications:
 Highest Degree.
 Year of Award:
 University:
 Area of Expertise:
- 9 A Short Biography (to be written in third person; 250-300 words max; in MS Word only – to be **ATTACHED**)
- 10 An Opinion/Write-up (a short paragraph; in MS Word only) on how the applicant qualifies to participate in the Training Programme - to be **ATTACHED**
- 11 An Abstract (about 250-300 words, in MS-Word only) of the Paper/Country Status - to be **ATTACHED**
- Date: Signature:

SECTION-B

ENDORSEMENT BY THE NOMINATING AUTHORITY

(The Applicant in a Member Country of the NAM S&T Centre must get the Application Form endorsed by the Focal Point of the Centre in his/her country, if he/she wishes to take advantages extended to the official nominee of the country. For the list of Member Countries and names/addresses of the Focal Points please visit the Centre’s official website; www.namstct.org.)

Name (in full):

Designation:

Signature:Date:

SEAL

Enclosures:

- An Opinion/Write-up (a short paragraph; in MS Word format) on how the applicant qualifies to participate in the Training Programme.
- A Short Biography (to be written in third person; 250-300 words max; in MS Word only) highlighting the current engagement, areas of expertise, major achievements, academic qualification and professional experience as succinctly as possible.
- An Abstract (about 250-300 words; in MS-Word only) of the Paper/Country Status Report.
- A copy of relevant pages of your valid Passport [It must have a period of validity of at least six months beyond the period of stay in South Africa].
