

20230507 ACP

Science diplomacy and developing communities

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The term “science diplomacy” has traditionally been used to describe either science in diplomacy (the use of science to improve relations between countries, since scientists work across political borders), or diplomacy to assist science (collaboration between countries in major projects, such as the Square Kilometre Array). Now, perhaps, the concept of diplomacy might be extended from the management of relations between countries to the relations between science and society. Science serves different kinds of communities: the local community near a university or school; the students (where they're coming from and where they're going to), the interests of the nation, the economic community, the global scientific community, and the global society. Communities in Africa are evolving fast, and the role of science is more influential than it has been before. The principle of freedom and responsibility in science, which is fundamental to scientific advancement and human and environmental well-being, has become more important than ever. In Africa, nations are making progress in science and also improving the quality of life, when the dialogue between science and society is functioning well. We are also suffering regress due to catastrophes and circumstances beyond our control, as well as policy failures (the provision of electricity is an excellent example). This session explores some of the challenges, such as insight and vital evidence in reports that are never read by policymakers; the session also explores new learning about project management on our continent. Scientists are used to paradigm shifts. What new understanding do we need to develop to gain traction for science in the service of our societies?