Report

Ocean Youth Ambassadors Promote Science Diplomacy in the Atlantic Basin: A New Generation Nurtures Connections Between Research, Policy and Community

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Introduction

The evolution of science diplomacy has been pivotal to progress in ocean sciences. Collaboration and effective communication have increased our understanding, protection and valuation of the ecosystem services and economic opportunities that exist across the Atlantic basin. Technology has improved connectivity between Atlantic nations, and a generation of informed, impassioned, and driven ocean professionals is emerging from the structures created through these collaborative efforts and shared visions. The All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance was initially built upon calls from the European Union (EU) member states and stakeholders for increased cooperation in marine infrastructure, research and innovation, which drove the Atlantic Maritime Strategy in 2011 and the Atlantic Action Plan in 2013. It led to the co-signing of the Galway statement by the EU, Canada and the USA with the joint aim of aligning efforts in ocean observation, increasing our understanding of ocean processes and promoting sustainable resource management. Four years later, the Belém statement was co-signed, expanding the cooperative network to South Africa and Brazil. Continued diplomatic efforts, now with a proven record of collaboration, communication and progress, brought about the integration of Argentina (2018), the Republic of Cabo Verde (2018), and the Kingdom of Morocco (2020), leading to the signing of the Azores Declaration of All-Atlantic Research & Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean in 2021. It was largely seen as an exemplary and tangible example of a global approach to multilateral cooperation in research and innovation, strengthening ties between science, communities, stakeholders, and policymakers from "pole-to-pole" around the Atlantic basin. A pivotal element of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance is the All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors programme. This programme enables cohorts of early career ocean professionals (ECOPs) to become actors of change in their community, elevate youth voices, bring their research into policy discussions, and promote ocean stewardship in its many

forms. This programme encourages the building and strengthening of the networks between researchers and other ocean professionals in a multicultural, multidisciplinary and multidimensional space, utilising local and global actions.



The 2020-2022 cohort of All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors, 26 young adults from 16 nations surrounding the Atlantic Ocean.

Science Diplomacy Workshop

On 11 July 2022, the All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors organised a workshop on Science Diplomacy across the Atlantic Ocean, hosted at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to the USA in Washington, DC. The focus of this event was to explore best practices concerning the role of science and innovation in the exploration and sustainable development of the Atlantic Ocean and the international collaborative efforts across and along the ocean basin. This event was held as a part of the All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassador (AAOYA) Summer School in Washington, DC, during the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance Forum co-hosted by Brazil and the United States over two events. This forum resulted in the signing of the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance Declaration, committing its signatories to work together in facing and overcoming the challenges of sustainable ocean development and realising the great potential of international collaboration. The workshop event was welcomed by Evelina Santa-Kahle, Counsellor & Deputy Head, Science and Technology at the German Embassy, and introductory remarks were given by the AAOYA coordination team, Lavinia Giulia Pomarico, Jan-Stefan Fritz and Wendy Namisnik. Evelina set the scene for the day by remarking on our shared connectedness to the ocean and the resulting duty to join forces across borders.

The first session featured a panel discussion on 'The potential of science diplomacy, international cooperation and the ocean', moderated by Gary Kett (AAOYA, Ireland) and Thando Mazomba (AAOYA, South Africa). Invited panellists were distinguished guests; Amanda Netburn - Assistant Director for Ocean Science and Technology, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Kirsten Sarri - President and CEO, National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation and Florent Bernard - Counsellor for Research & Innovation, Delegation of the EU to the USA. The moderators facilitated conversations on topics such as "success stories in ocean science diplomacy", "the needs and challenges of the science diplomacy community", and "methods of building trust to foster collaboration and uptake of science". Panellists gave informed insight coming from personal and professional experiences. They articulated success stories that inspire the community to continue in their efforts, for example, the United Nations Conference of Parties in 2016 as a

turning point in international recognition and agreement on climate action; the formation of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; the advancements in media portrayal of climate issues and the increase in climate conversations amongst the wider public.



The first panel of the AAOYA Science Diplomacy workshop discussing the value and needs of science diplomacy and the potential for international cooperation across the All-Atlantic.

After some thoughtful contributions on these topics, discussing their strengths and weaknesses and areas to be improved upon for future efforts, the topic turned to "top-down structural or scientific needs of the science diplomacy community, and the required commitments that can be made to meet them", as posed by Thando Mazomba. Panellists spoke on the need for wide distribution and access to the internet as a right and a requirement for active citizenship and democratic participation. They highlighted the importance of societal justice and inclusion, that hearing all voices is key to their involvement in decision-making and reducing inequity across the board, needing diplomacy to act, not only at different levels but in different spheres too. To this, Kirsten proposed the question of if there is space within politics/diplomacy to push the limits on the overlapping economy, culture, science - more importantly, applicable science. Naturally, this spurred a lively and engaged discussion from the audience members, All-Atlantic Ocean youth ambassadors, dignitaries and representatives from various organisations and governments, who all expressed valuable insights and experiences on progress made so far and visions looking ahead.

The second-panel discussion titled 'The Atlantic Alliance and the potential for science and innovation cooperation into the future' was moderated by Othman Cherkaoui Dekkaki (AAOYA, Morocco) and Sigi Gruber



Panel 2 at the AAOYA Science Diplomacy workshop discussing the potential for science and innovation cooperation in the future and what lies ahead for the Atlantic Alliance.

(Head of Unit Retd, DG Research & Innovation, European Commission). The panel consisted of esteemed guests, Maria Zaira Turchi - Director for Institutional Cooperation, Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq, Gilbert Siko - Director of Marine & Polar Research, Department of Science & Innovation, South Africa, and Liisa Peramaki - Director, Ocean Decade at Fisheries and Ocean Canada. The panellists spoke of their journey in working together in joining the All-Atlantic Alliance, the challenges and opportunities that lie within international cooperation and the progress that can be and has been made with increased diplomatic efforts based on scientific endeavours with regards to the Atlantic Ocean. This conversation also featured valuable input from the experiences and opinions of the audience participants. Speakers discussed how they would like to see research and innovation be fostered in the future, the value of Findable Accessible Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR) data and the importance of multi-stakeholder involvement, particularly on the local and community level.

Conclusion

The conversations in both panels received relevant input from audience members, distinguished guests, and participants. Overall, the discussions that ensued proved engaging and thought-provoking. It is evident that concerted efforts are being made across the Atlantic basin to ensure that cooperation, dialogue and agreements can persist, that efforts made together are stronger than the sum of each nation's efforts alone, and that inclusion and diversity across cultures and generations is key to ensuring the continuation, and improvement of an All-Atlantic community that is effective and impactful in its actions. The youth voices at the workshops expressed their concern about how much more needs to be done, to achieve the tasks ahead for climate and ocean protection. Science diplomacy was hailed as a great connector and invaluable tool for our development as a global community.

With this workshop, the All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors showcased their understanding of the value of Science Diplomacy. It was reaffirming to witness an enthusiastic group of early career ocean professionals demonstrate their intricate appreciation for multi-generational, multi-cultural and socio-economic considerations in their approach to tackling global issues and enacting local change. Guest speakers provided a framework of examples, challenges and opportunities for future efforts in research, policymaking, and outreach, as well as in international cooperation. Recommendations touched on the building of trust between all actors involved in decision-making and those impacted by such decisions - for *scientists* to develop their effective communication practices, utilising ocean literacy tools to increase public awareness and support for pro-environmental policies, and for *policymakers* to put scientific evidence at the forefront of decision-making to ensure policies implemented can have an effective output. The future of the Atlantic Alliance looks promising with increased calls for further cooperation and integration of research and innovation. A deep source of optimism and hope can be found in the great appetite in youth groups for increasing progress in ocean sciences, climate action, nurturing strong bonds in diplomacy for the furtherance of global security and development.



All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors with some of their panel guests following deep conversations on the future of science diplomacy, international cooperation and ocean science.