



# THE FIRST AFRICAN DIGITAL DIPLOMACY CONFERENCE: POLICY, PRACTICE, AND THEORY

29 - 30 July 2020

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has changed and continues to impact the concept and practice of diplomacy. Today, ministries of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions and multinational agencies leverage digital platforms for the conduct of foreign policy work. Yet, Africa is generally seen as lagging behind the rest of the world in not just in digital diplomacy as a practice but also in the study and research of the phenomenon.

To help shed light on the African dimension of the digital-diplomacy nexus, the first ever digital diplomacy conference is being convened at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, 29-30 July, 2020.

The conference is being organized as partnership of the African Centre for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) at University of the Witwatersrand's and the Centre on Public Diplomacy (CPD) based at the University of Southern California. The South African Institute of International Affairs is a supporting partner.

The broad goal is to bring together a wide range of digital diplomacy academics and scholars, foreign policy practitioners, civil society and tech company experts to deliberate not only the opportunities, prospects and challenges of this new form of diplomacy for Africa's engagement with the world but also its internal relations. While the conference is open to participants from around the world, delegates from Africa and the US are particularly encouraged to sign up.

Proposals are invited from scholars from Africa, the US and around the world. Particularly encouraged are submissions based on studies on African countries considered digital diplomacy showcases such as Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. Submissions that deal with African regional economic communities as well as French and Portuguese speaking are also encouraged.

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- Prof. Jay Wang, Centre on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California
- Prof. Nicholas Cull, University of Southern California, Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism
- Prof. Corneliu Bjola, University of Oxford
- Prof. Iginio Gagliardone, University of the Witwatersrand

### PROPOSALS ARE INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING SUB-THEMES AND TOPICS:

#### Theoretical and conceptual issues

- What is digital diplomacy?
- Digital diplomacy as digital humanities
- Critical analysis of Africa-US digital diplomacy
- African, US and global perspectives on the concept, dynamics and practice of digital diplomacy
- Digital diplomacy and soft power
- Conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to digital diplomacy
- The future of digital diplomacy in Africa

### **Scoping the African digital diplomacy landscape**

- Country and regional case studies of African digital diplomacy
- Digital diplomacy in African ministries of foreign affairs and diplomatic missions
- Comparative analysis of African digital diplomacy versus the digital diplomacies of other countries and regions of the world

### **Policy and practice issues**

- The impact of digital platforms on African diplomacy; the impact of African diplomacy on digital platforms
- African digital diplomacy towards the US; US digital diplomacy towards Africa
- Digital diplomacy and place and nation branding
- Digital diplomacy and foreign public opinion
- The intersection of the digital economy and digital diplomacy

### **The platforms of digital diplomacy**

- The role of tech companies
- Social networking sites
- Online media
- Big data, Artificial Intelligence, 5G technologies, fourth industrial revolution
- Mobile telephony

### **The challenges of digital diplomacy**

- Security and privacy
- Manipulation, misinformation and disinformation
- Radicalism and terrorism
- Hacking and leaking
- Ethics in digital diplomacy

### **The intersection of digital diplomacy and other varieties of public diplomacy**

- Cultural diplomacy
- Humanitarian and crisis communication
- International exchanges
- Science diplomacy
- Diaspora diplomacy
- Sports diplomacy

### **Important Dates and Information**

- A 300-word abstract and a 110-word bio should be submitted
- 28 March 2020: Proposal submission deadline
- 15 April 2020: Notification of acceptance
- Conference fees:
  - Senior and established scholars: \$200
  - Non-academic participants: diplomats, civil society, techies: \$200
  - Early career scholars (postdocs, recent doctoral graduates): \$100
  - Students (honours, masters, doctoral): \$50
- Note proof for the above categories will be required
- Submissions to: [acsus.research@wits.ac.za](mailto:acsus.research@wits.ac.za)

### **Further details**

- Conference proceedings will be available on online platforms shortly after the conference
- A selected number of presentations will be published in a special issue of an outstanding journal
- Conference proceedings will be published
- A one-day pre-conference hands-on workshop aimed at diplomats will be organised on 28 July and delegates will be free to attend the sessions

For further information, contact **Bob Wekesa** at [bob.wekesa@wits.ac.za](mailto:bob.wekesa@wits.ac.za) | [www.wits.ac.za/acsus](http://www.wits.ac.za/acsus)