

CALL FOR APPLICATION

3RD EAST AFRICA REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING WORKSHOP:

STRENGTHENING SCIENCE DIPLOMACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5 – 9 October 2026

Main Campus, Maseno University
(Kisumu, Kenya)

ORGANIZED BY



National
Research
Foundation



BACKGROUND

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are increasingly recognised as essential drivers of sustainable development, regional integration and international cooperation. As the world confronts complex and interconnected challenges - including climate change, biodiversity loss, food and water insecurity, global health threats, energy transitions and emerging technologies - there is a growing need for scientific knowledge to inform policy, support international cooperation and contribute to evidence-informed decision-making.

Recognising the critical role of science in addressing these challenges, the United Nations proclaimed the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD) 2024–2033, which calls for strengthening the contribution of science to sustainable development through enhanced international cooperation, stronger science-policy-society interfaces, capacity development and inclusive scientific partnerships. The Decade underscores the importance of translating scientific knowledge into practical solutions that benefit society and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context, science diplomacy has emerged as an important approach for strengthening the interface between science, policy and international relations. Through science diplomacy, scientific evidence can inform policy and diplomatic processes, diplomacy can facilitate international scientific collaboration, and scientific cooperation can strengthen dialogue and trust among countries. These interconnected dimensions are increasingly important for addressing transboundary challenges and advancing sustainable development.

For Eastern Africa, science diplomacy presents significant opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation, promote evidence-informed policymaking and enhance the contribution of science to addressing shared development priorities. While research capacity across the region continues to grow, many researchers and science professionals have limited opportunities to develop practical competencies in policy engagement, science communication, stakeholder engagement, negotiation and international collaboration. Recognising this need, the East Africa Regional Workshop (EARW) Series was established in 2024 to strengthen research capacity, proposal development and transdisciplinary approaches to sustainability challenges among researchers in Eastern Africa. Building on the achievements of the first two workshops, the third edition expands the Series into science diplomacy, equipping participants with the knowledge, practical competencies and regional networks needed to connect scientific research with policymaking, regional cooperation and international partnerships.

The **3rd East Africa Regional Capacity Building Training Workshop: Strengthening Science Diplomacy for Sustainable Development** is jointly organised by the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC), Maseno University, Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC), National Research Fund Kenya (NRF-Kenya), the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Belmont Forum, Future Earth Africa Hub (FEAH), the National Research Foundation South Africa (NRF-SA), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International University Network on Cultural and Biological Diversity (IUNCBD), and the Ecosystem-based Programme for Integrated Climate Action Network (EPIC Network).

Through this partnership, the workshop seeks to strengthen science diplomacy capacity, foster regional and South-South collaboration, and cultivate a growing community of researchers and professionals equipped to translate scientific knowledge into evidence-informed policy, strengthen international partnerships, and contribute to sustainable development across Eastern Africa.

OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the workshop are to:

1. Strengthen participants' understanding of the concepts, principles and practice of science diplomacy and its relevance to sustainable development and regional cooperation.
2. Develop practical competencies in science communication, policy engagement, stakeholder mapping, negotiation and consensus-building.
3. Enhance participants' capacity to translate scientific research into policy-relevant knowledge, evidence-informed recommendations and practical solutions.
4. Strengthen participants' ability to develop and sustain interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and regional partnerships through science diplomacy.
5. Support participants in designing practical science diplomacy initiatives that can be applied within their institutions, countries and professional practice.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the principles and practical applications of science diplomacy and their relevance to regional and global challenges.
2. Communicate scientific evidence effectively and apply stakeholder engagement, negotiation and consensus-building skills in science-policy contexts.
3. Translate research and technical knowledge into policy-relevant messages, recommendations and practical responses.
4. Identify and develop strategic partnerships to support regional cooperation and collaborative science diplomacy initiatives.
5. Develop an action and impact plan for applying science diplomacy within their institution, country or professional work.

Participants will leave the workshop with practical tools, regional networks and an individual action plan to advance science diplomacy within their institutions, countries and professional communities.

TARGET GROUPS

The workshop is designed for professionals across Eastern Africa who are engaged in research, policy, science advisory, and international cooperation, including:

- Researchers, academics and research managers;
- Government officials and policymakers;
- Science advisors, diplomacy practitioners and international cooperation professionals;
- Representatives from research institutions, science councils and non-governmental organisations; and
- Professionals working on regional and global sustainable development challenges, including climate change, health, biodiversity, food systems, water, energy and emerging technologies.

The workshop welcomes participants at all career stages and seeks to promote geographic, institutional and disciplinary diversity across Eastern Africa. Women and professionals from underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to participate.

METHODOLOGY

The workshop adopts a participant-centred and practice-oriented learning approach that combines conceptual understanding with practical application. Designed to promote active learning and peer exchange, the programme integrates expert knowledge with real-world case studies, collaborative problem-solving, and experiential learning.

The methodology includes:

- **Interactive Lectures** – Expert-led sessions introducing the concepts, principles and applications of science diplomacy.
- **Country Presentations and Case Studies** – Sharing regional experiences and analysing real-world science diplomacy challenges to strengthen contextual understanding.
- **Practical Skills Development** – Hands-on exercises in science communication, policy engagement, stakeholder mapping, negotiation and policy brief development.
- **Simulation and Collaborative Learning** – Interactive negotiation simulations and a Collaborative Challenge Lab, where multidisciplinary teams develop practical recommendations to address regional science-policy challenges.
- **Reflection and Networking** – Facilitated discussions, participant reflections and networking opportunities to foster peer learning and regional collaboration.

The workshop emphasises interdisciplinary collaboration, experiential learning and the practical application of science diplomacy approaches to support evidence-informed policymaking and sustainable development across Eastern Africa.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The five-day workshop is designed as an integrated and progressive learning journey:



Each day builds on the previous one, moving participants from foundational understanding to practical skills development, application to real-world challenges, leadership and impact planning, and continued engagement beyond the workshop.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

DAY 1 - 5 OCTOBER 2026 (Monday)		
08:00 – 08:30	Registration and Welcome Coffee <i>Participants arrive, register, and network.</i>	
Opening Ceremony		
08:30 – 9:30	Opening Remarks and Programme Overview <i>Opening remarks by the Organisers and Partners, followed by an overview of the workshop objectives, learning journey and expected outcomes.</i> - Opening remarks by Maseno University - Welcoming remarks by ISTIC - Welcoming remarks by Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre	
Theme I: Understanding Science Diplomacy: Concepts, Contexts and Actors		
09:30 – 9:50	Keynote Address: Unlocking Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Dividend through Science Diplomacy	Session by: TBC
09:50 – 10:10	Panel Discussion	Session by: TBC
10:10 – 10:30	Morning Coffee Break <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity.</i>	
10:30 – 12:00	Module 1.1: Foundations of Science Diplomacy Part 1 – Conceptual Overview Topics: • Origins and evolution of science diplomacy • The three dimensions of science diplomacy • Science diplomacy in global governance • Science diplomacy for sustainable development Part 2 – Interactive Dialogue Participants reflect on: • Where science intersects with policy in their work • How science diplomacy can strengthen their research, institution or organisation	Session by: TBC
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch Break <i>Lunch provided on-site</i>	
13:00 – 14:30	Module 1.2: Science Diplomacy in Africa and the Global South <i>This session examines the role of science diplomacy in addressing regional priorities and advancing sustainable development across Africa and the Global South.</i>	Session by: TBC

	Key Themes: • Science diplomacy in Africa and the Global South • Regional cooperation and integration • Science diplomacy for sustainable development • South-South and triangular cooperation Interactive Dialogue Participants discuss: • Opportunities and challenges for advancing science diplomacy across East Africa and the wider Global South	
14:30 – 15:30	Module 1.3: The Science Diplomacy Ecosystem <i>Participants explore the institutions, actors and partnerships that shape science diplomacy at national, regional and international levels.</i> Actors include: • Government ministries • Universities and research institutions • National academies and research councils • Regional organisations • International organisations • Civil society • Private sector Interactive Activity <i>Participants work in groups to develop a stakeholder map for a selected regional challenge, identifying key actors, their respective roles and opportunities for collaboration.</i>	Session by: TBC
15:30 – 15:45	Afternoon Break <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity</i>	
15:45 – 16:45	Module 1.4: Signature Exercise – The 60-Second Science Diplomacy Pitch <i>Participants present their research, professional work or institutional role in one minute as if speaking to a policymaker, development partner or potential international collaborator.</i> Objectives: • Practise concise and effective communication. • Demonstrate the policy and societal relevance of research and professional work. • Introduce participants' expertise and interests. • Foster networking and future collaboration. Peer and facilitator feedback will be provided.	Session by: TBC
16:45	End of Day 1	

DAY 2 - 6 OCTOBER 2026 (Tuesday)		
08:00 - 08:30	Arrival and Welcome Coffee <i>Participants arrive and network</i>	
Theme II: Practising Science Diplomacy: Communication, Negotiation and Collaboration		
08:30 - 08:45	Reflections on Day 1 and Preview of Day 2 <i>Participants reflect on the key lessons from Day 1 and explore how science diplomacy concepts translate into practice.</i>	Session by: TBC
08.45 – 10:15	Module 2.1: Communicating Science for Policy and Diplomacy <i>This session explores how scientific knowledge can be communicated effectively to policymakers, diplomats, development partners and other non-specialist audiences. Participants learn practical approaches for framing evidence, communicating uncertainty and tailoring messages to different stakeholders.</i> Topics include: • Understanding policy audiences • Framing scientific evidence • Communicating uncertainty • Writing and speaking for policy impact • Communicating evidence for evidence-informed policymaking Practical Exercise <i>Participants prepare a short policy message based on their own research, professional work or institutional experience.</i>	Session by: TBC
10:15 – 10:30	Morning Coffee Break <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity</i>	
10.30 – 12:00	Module 2.2: Negotiation and Consensus Building <i>Science diplomacy often requires balancing scientific evidence with political priorities, institutional interests and societal needs. This session introduces participants to the principles of negotiation, stakeholder engagement and consensus building in science diplomacy.</i> Topics include: • Negotiation strategies • Interests versus positions • Stakeholder engagement • Building consensus across sectors Interactive Exercise <i>Participants practise negotiation strategies through a facilitated multi-stakeholder scenario.</i>	Session by: TBC

12:00 - 13:00	Lunch Break <i>Lunch provided on-site</i>	
13:00 – 15:30	Module 2.3: Flagship Exercise – Science Diplomacy Simulation <i>This immersive simulation is the core learning exercise of the workshop. Participants assume the roles of different stakeholders engaged in negotiating a regional or international challenge requiring a science diplomacy approach.</i> Learning Objectives Participants experience: • Multi-stakeholder negotiation • Evidence-informed decision-making • Competing national and institutional interests • Consensus building in complex policy environments From 3.2: Topics include: • Partnership models • Co-creation and co-design • South–South and triangular cooperation • Building trust across institutions • Mobilising resources for collaborative initiatives	Session by: TBC
15:30 -15:45	Afternoon Break <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity</i>	
15:45 – 16:30	Module 2.4: Reflection and Debrief <i>Facilitators lead a structured reflection on the simulation, encouraging participants to examine the strategies they adopted, the challenges encountered and the lessons learned for science diplomacy practice.</i> Reflection Themes: • What worked well? • What challenges emerged? • How was scientific evidence used? • What leadership and communication skills proved most important?	Session by: TBC
16:30	End of Day 2	

DAY 3 - 7 OCTOBER 2026 (Wednesday)		
08:00 – 08:30	Arrival and Welcome Coffee <i>Participants arrive and network</i>	
Theme III: Applying Science Diplomacy: Addressing Regional and Global Challenges		
08:30 – 08:45	Reflections on Day 2 and Preview of Day 3 <i>Participants reflect on the key lessons from the previous day's simulation and explore how science diplomacy can be applied to address complex regional and global challenges.</i>	Session by: TBC

08:45 – 10:15	Module 3.1: Science Diplomacy for Sustainable Development <i>This session explores how science diplomacy contributes to addressing complex sustainability challenges through international cooperation, evidence-informed policymaking and multi-stakeholder partnerships.</i> Key Themes: • Science diplomacy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) • Climate change and environmental sustainability • Public health and pandemic preparedness • Food, water and energy security • Emerging technologies and responsible innovation Interactive Dialogue <i>Participants discuss how science diplomacy can support solutions to shared challenges facing East Africa and the Global South.</i>	Session by: TBC
10:15 – 10:30	Morning Coffee Break	
10:30 – 12:00	Module 3.2: Building Partnerships for Science Diplomacy Deep dive into thematic areas: Interactive Exercise <i>Participants analyse successful regional and international science diplomacy partnerships and identify the factors that contribute to their success.</i> <i>Thematic areas:</i> 1. Agriculture; 2. Energy; 3. Space science; Environmental and climate (Biodiversity and water) diplomacy; 4. Health; 5. Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies	Session by: Landscape Alliance (CIFOR – ICRAF), Kenya Space agency, UNEP, Landscape Alliance (CIFOR – ICRAF)
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch Break <i>Lunch provided on-site</i>	
13:00 – 15:15	Module 3.3: Challenge Lab – Science Diplomacy in Action • Group report in the areas discussed during the morning breakout sessions.	Session by: TBC
15:15- 15:30	Afternoon Break <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity</i>	
15:30 - 16:30	Module 3.4: Challenge Lab Presentations <i>Each team presents its proposed science diplomacy strategy, followed by feedback from facilitators and participants.</i>	Session by: TBC

	<i>The session highlights different approaches to science diplomacy and encourages peer learning across disciplines, sectors and countries.</i>	
16:30	End of Day 3	

DAY 4 - 8 OCTOBER 2026 (Thursday)		
08:00 - 08:30	Arrival and Welcome Coffee <i>Participants network and prepare for the final day of the training programme.</i>	
Theme IV: Leading Through Science Diplomacy: From Action to Impact		
08:30 – 08:45	Reflections on Day 3 and Preview of Day 4 <i>Participants reflect on the key lessons from the Challenge Lab and consider how science diplomacy leadership can translate collaborative ideas and strategies into sustained impact.</i>	Session by: TBC
08:45 - 10:15	Module 4.1: Leadership in Science Diplomacy <i>This session explores the leadership competencies required to navigate the science-policy-diplomacy interface and to lead collaborative initiatives across institutions, sectors and countries.</i> Key Themes • Leadership in complex policy environments • Building trust and credibility • Influencing without authority • Ethical leadership in science diplomacy • Adaptive and systems leadership Interactive Dialogue <i>Participants reflect on their own leadership journey and identify the competencies they wish to strengthen to become more effective science diplomacy leaders.</i>	Session by: TBC
10:15 – 10:30	Morning Coffee Break	
10:30 - 12:00	Module 4.2: Leading and Sustaining Regional and Global Partnerships <i>This session explores how science diplomacy leaders initiate, steward, sustain and scale strategic partnerships across governments, academia, funding agencies, international organisations, civil society and the private sector.</i> Topics • Partnership development and stewardship • Building regional and international networks • South–South and triangular cooperation • Resource mobilisation • Communities of practice	Session by: TBC

	Interactive Exercise <i>Participants identify strategic partners and opportunities to strengthen science diplomacy initiatives within their institutions, countries and the wider region.</i>	
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch Break <i>Lunch provided on-site</i>	
13:00 - 14:00	Module 4.3A: Science Diplomacy Road Map for Thematic Areas	Session by: TBC
14.00-15.00	Module 4.3B: From Action to Impact – Planning and Evaluating Science Diplomacy Initiatives <i>This session supports participants in translating workshop learning into practical science diplomacy initiatives that are strategic, measurable and sustainable. Participants develop an action plan while considering how success can be monitored, evaluated and adapted over time.</i> Topics • Why science diplomacy outcomes are difficult to measure • Designing science diplomacy initiatives • Results-based approaches to science diplomacy • Indicators for partnerships, policy influence and capacity development • Capturing intangible outcomes (trust, networks and influence) • Learning and adapting science diplomacy initiatives for long-term sustainability Interactive Exercise <i>Participants develop an implementation plan for a science diplomacy initiative, including:</i> • Strategic objectives • Key stakeholders and partnerships • Expected outputs and outcomes • Indicators of success • Mechanisms for learning and adaptation	Session by: TBC
15.000 – 16:30	Module 4.4: The Maseno Dialogue and Commitment to Action <i>The workshop culminates in a facilitated dialogue where participants collectively reflect on the future of science diplomacy in East Africa and the Global South. Building on the learning from the preceding sessions, participants identify regional priorities, emerging opportunities and practical actions to strengthen science diplomacy ecosystems across the region.</i> Dialogue Themes • Strengthening regional collaboration • Building resilient science diplomacy ecosystems	Session moderated by: TBC

	• Future priorities for East Africa • Opportunities for long-term collaboration • Sustaining the community of practice Dialogue and Commitment Outcomes Participants collectively formulate the Maseno Dialogue on Science Diplomacy, comprising a set of shared recommendations and commitments to strengthen science diplomacy across East Africa and the Global South. Drawing from their individual Action Plans, each participant also shares: • One action they will implement within the next six months • One partnership they intend to pursue • One contribution they will make to strengthening science diplomacy within their institution, country or region This concluding session reinforces collective ownership, accountability, peer support and the transition from learning to implementation.	
16:30	Afternoon Refreshments and End of Day 4 <i>Refreshments and networking opportunity</i>	

DAY 5 - 9 OCTOBER 2026 (Friday)		
08:30 - 09:00	Arrival and Welcome Coffee <i>Participants gather for the final day of the programme and reconnect before the Closing Ceremony.</i>	
Theme V: Beyond the Workshop: Building the Science Diplomacy Community		
09:00 - 10:30	Closing Ceremony <i>The Closing Ceremony marks the successful completion of the EARW Science Diplomacy Leadership Programme and celebrates the achievements of participants, trainers and partners in advancing science diplomacy across East Africa and the Global South.</i> Programme • Welcome Remarks • Participant Reflections • Remarks by Workshop Partners • Presentation of Certificates • Closing Address • Official Closing of the Workshop • Group Photograph Session by: • Maseno University	

	• International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC) • Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC) • Invited Guests	
10:30 - 10:45	Departure Briefing <i>Participants receive an overview of the field experience, including the itinerary, logistics and safety arrangements.</i>	Session by: TBC
10:45 - 16:30	Science, Culture and Sustainability Field Experience <i>The field experience provides participants with an opportunity to explore the interconnections between science, society, culture and sustainable development in the local context.</i> <i>Beyond the educational experience, the excursion serves as an informal platform for networking, strengthening professional relationships and exploring opportunities for future collaboration among participants, trainers and partner organisations.</i> Learning Themes may include: • Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation • Community-based natural resource management • Sustainable livelihoods • Cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge • Science for local development • Nature-based solutions for sustainability	Venue: TBC excursion
16:30	Return to Hotels	

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- **A regional cohort of science diplomacy practitioners** equipped with practical competencies in science-policy engagement, negotiation, partnership development and evidence-informed decision-making.
- **Science diplomacy strategies and action plans** developed through the Collaborative Challenge Lab to address priority regional and transboundary challenges.
- **The Kisumu Dialogue on Science Diplomacy**, capturing participants' shared recommendations and commitments for strengthening science diplomacy across Eastern Africa.
- **A strengthened regional community of practice**, fostering continued collaboration, peer learning and South-South partnerships beyond the workshop.

VENUE

Maseno University, Kisumu Campus, Kenya

DURATION

The workshop will run onsite at Maseno University, Kisumu Campus, over **five days (5 –9 October 2026)**.

LANGUAGE

The workshop will be delivered in English.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be selected based on the following considerations:

- Professional relevance: active engagement in research, policy, diplomacy, or international cooperation work related to sustainable development.
- Geographic and institutional diversity: representation across countries, institutions, and disciplines within Eastern Africa.
- Commitment to engagement: willingness to participate fully and contribute actively to peer learning throughout the workshop.
- Gender balance and inclusion: women and individuals from underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Availability: applicants must be available to attend onsite at Maseno University, Kisumu Campus, for the full duration of the workshop (21–25 September 2026).

APPLICATION

Applications open: **31 July 2026**

All applications must be submitted online via the link or Scan the QR code below:

Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/LWY6RJ6mNtuT6x2U9>

Scan the QR



Applicants are encouraged to apply early, as places are limited and will be allocated on a competitive basis to ensure a diverse, gender-balanced, and interdisciplinary cohort of participants.

CLOSING DATE

Application deadline: **23 August 2026**

Notification of successful participants: **28 August 2026**

Applicants who do not receive word by 28 August 2026 should consider their application unsuccessful.

ORGANIZERS

- International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO (ISTIC)
- Maseno University
- National Research Fund Kenya (NRF-Kenya)
- Future Earth Africa Hub Leadership Centre (FEAHLIC)
- National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)

- Belmont Forum
- Future Earth Africa Hub (FEAH)
- National Research Foundation South Africa (NRF-SA)
- Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- International University Network on Cultural and Biological Diversity (IUNCBD)

ENQUIRIES

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