



Pekka Aula

Greeting from the Secretary General

*Finnish Academy of Science and Letters
and the world of science diplomacy*

EVER SINCE ITS FOUNDATION in 1908 the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters has had an international dimension to its activities. In the early years its members were also involved in international activities that were not academic but were of crucial importance at the time when the newly independent state of Finland was feeling its way on the international scene and had not yet developed a diplomatic network for establishing foreign relations.

In other words, as the country was building up its diplomatic relations with the outside world, the reliable foreign contacts that its academics already had, together with their linguistic and social skills, were in great demand. Thus the Academy's members played an active part in determining Finland's international sta-

tus. Use was made of them in the foreign service, and some served as ambassadors in various parts of the world from 1918 onwards. All in all, substantial links existed between science and the state administration in the early decades, since in addition a large number of members were at some time or other involved in the leading circles of government, as prime minister or cabinet ministers. Later, however, official relations with the government administration, and particularly collaboration between the academic community and the foreign service, became more tenuous, almost to the point of breaking off altogether.

In very recent years science and foreign relations have begun to find each other again, both in Finland and elsewhere,

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leading to the emergence of the concept of Science Diplomacy, the importance of which has been particularly emphasized at times of crisis. The concept is clearly a product of the new millennium, but related achievements can be found in history. One of the best-known examples is the founding of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in 1954, in response to a desire to restore large-scale scientific collaboration between European countries that had been on opposite sides or fought against one another during the Second World War and thereby to repair the damaged political relations between them.

The concept of Science Diplomacy is somewhat indeterminate, a situation which has hindered its adoption in Finland, as elsewhere, but it is generally accepted that it possesses three distinct aspects:

In the first place, it implies support provided by science and research for foreign policy or the management of foreign relations (Science in Diplomacy). Under normal conditions this refers to the basing of foreign policy decisions on scientific facts, while under exceptional conditions it may mean the harnessing national scientific potential to search for ways out of a crisis situation.

Secondly, the term may refer to the use of foreign policy and diplomacy for promoting international collaboration in scientific matters (Diplomacy for Science). The aim would be not only to carry out better science but also to improve domestic competitiveness by supporting international science and taking advantage of its achievements.

In addition, science can be an instrument of foreign policy, i.e. it can be made

use of to reduce political and economic tensions between nations (Science for Diplomacy), assisting diplomatic initiatives by pursuing non-political or non-ideological scientific cooperation. This viewpoint places emphasis on science as a part of the "soft power" wielded by nations, and thereby a part of a government's effort to achieve its foreign policy goals and build up a positive image for its country.

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters is taking part in the exploratory project *New Models and Practises for Finnish Science Diplomacy* financed by the Government Analysis, Assessment and Research unit (VNTEAS), which is designed to ascertain the scope and development needs of Finnish science diplomacy. A further aim of the work is to bring the concept of science diplomacy up to date, given the complexity and pronounced interdependence of the modern world, where desperate problems extend their influence from the global to the local level and from one political sphere to another.

This is an important project, because the world is facing such enormous and complex challenges. The finding of solutions to global problems such as climate change, pandemics and migration will call for the most competent scientific knowledge available and its application to both national and international decision-making. Science diplomacy can be expected to play a major role in this. Science needs diplomacy and diplomacy needs science.

This project will be a new venture for the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, but it will mean in effect following the same historical path of dynamic international endeavour and active collaboration with the country's foreign policy administration on which it set out. If we are

to look for the roots of the connection between science diplomacy and the academies of science and letters we nevertheless have to go back much further in time:

in Britain the Royal Society appointed a secretary for international affairs in 1723, almost 60 years before England gained its first Foreign Minister.

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