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Science diplomacy is your job

You may not have known it until now, but you, as a scientist, are a diplomat. Collaborative science tends to lower global tension while building economic stability and promoting meritocracy. As you read the outstanding articles in this issue of EQ, see if you can extract the threads of *science diplomacy*, a major effort at the US State Department.

Scientists interact across borders of all kinds—political, gender, disciplinary—because we seek truth. Multidisciplinarity is so important to the Materials Research Society that it is in the MRS Constitution. What a joy to discover a thought partner regardless of country, religion, or gender!

To illustrate, consider science diplomacy efforts involving the Middle East (ME). MRS meetings—with 40% international attendance—nucleate many ME exchanges naturally. Similarly, the Malta “Bridge to Peace” Conferences have convened over 60 ME scientists since 2003. Finally, a remarkable nascent center for science diplomacy, the SESAME synchrotron, includes partners Israel, Iran, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Cyprus, Bahrain, Pakistan, Turkey, and host Jordan!

Imagine the new heights of discourse in the Middle East when readers can explore EQ topics at Malta and MRS Meetings using data from SESAME. Innovations based on new discoveries about thermoelectrics, graphene, battery materials, and membranes—to name just a few topics—will inevitably help people in this region.

Now add in the attraction of entrepreneurship in a science incubator city like Masdar. We are lucky stakeholders in exciting, grand experiments in science diplomacy, hence the much-needed emphasis on science at the US State Department.

You are already involved in science diplomacy just by doing science. With this awareness you can be circumspect and effective in international engagements. When traveling abroad, please contact embassies to volunteer for outreach.

Unlike table tennis matches and basketball games, science diplomacy at its best is not episodic, forced, or even scheduled. To become sustainable as a diplomatic endeavor, researchers and funding agencies must appreciate and emphasize the broader international impacts of our science.

Alan J. Hurd

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To suggest ideas for ENERGY QUARTERLY, to get involved, or for information on sponsorship, send email to materialsforenergy@mrs.org.

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