CPSS AFRICA × LINCOLN INSTITUTE · THROUGH THE CONGRESSIONAL STUDY GROUP

Parliamentary Diplomacy

A Professional Guide to Legislative Diplomacy, International Engagement and Parliamentary Relations

2026 EDITION

Strengthening Legislative Voices, Partnerships and Influence in International Affairs

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE

CPSS | Center for Policy & Strategic Studies Africa.

Lincoln Institute of Diplomacy & International Relations

Congressional Study Group

About This Guide

Parliamentary diplomacy has become an increasingly important dimension of international relations. Legislatures are no longer engaged internationally only as observers of foreign policy. Members of Parliament, parliamentary leaders, committees and parliamentary institutions increasingly participate in bilateral relations, regional integration, peacebuilding, international cooperation, trade and investment dialogue, migration, development, human rights, security and global policy discussions.

Parliamentary diplomacy provides a channel through which elected representatives engage their counterparts across borders, exchange legislative experience, build institutional relationships, contribute to international dialogue and communicate the perspectives and interests of the people they represent.

Yet international parliamentary engagement requires more than travel, conferences and formal meetings. Effective parliamentary diplomacy requires preparation, policy knowledge, diplomatic judgment, institutional coordination, protocol, negotiation skills, strategic communication, documentation and sustained follow-up.

This Guide provides a professional framework for understanding and practising parliamentary diplomacy. It is designed to assist Members of Parliament, parliamentary leaders, committee members, parliamentary staff, researchers, legislative analysts, protocol officers, diplomatic practitioners and other professionals involved in legislative international engagement.

The Guide seeks to answer five practical questions:

1. Why should Parliament engage internationally?
2. Who should engage and at what institutional level?
3. How should parliamentary diplomacy be prepared and conducted?
4. What national, parliamentary or institutional interests should guide the engagement?
5. How can engagements produce measurable results after the delegation returns home?

A PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

The Guide is intended as a professional and educational resource. It does not, by itself, constitute an official policy, rule or procedure of any national Parliament unless formally adopted or incorporated by the relevant parliamentary authority.

About the Partners

About CPSS Africa

The Center for Policy and Strategic Studies (CPSS) Africa is a policy and strategic studies institution engaged in research, training, policy dialogue and professional development in international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, geopolitics, peace and security, governance and Africa's relations with global and emerging powers.

CPSS Africa seeks to strengthen the capacity of African institutions and professionals to understand and engage a rapidly changing international environment. Its work brings together research, executive education, policy dialogue, professional networks and strategic analysis.

Parliamentary diplomacy represents an important area within this mandate because legislatures are increasingly significant actors in international affairs. Through the Parliamentary Diplomacy programme, CPSS Africa seeks to contribute to:

- Professional development of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff
- Stronger legislative engagement in foreign affairs
- Comparative legislative learning
- Parliamentary-to-parliamentary relations
- Diplomatic and negotiation skills
- International policy understanding
- Regional and continental parliamentary cooperation
- Congressional-parliamentary relations
- Institutional partnerships
- Stronger knowledge management and follow-up from international engagements

About the Lincoln Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations

The Lincoln Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations provides a platform for professional education, executive learning, research and engagement in diplomacy, international relations, foreign policy and related fields.

Its collaboration with CPSS Africa provides an academic and professional dimension to initiatives aimed at strengthening the knowledge and practical capabilities of parliamentarians, diplomats, public officials, researchers and international affairs practitioners.

The partnership recognises that contemporary diplomacy requires professionals who understand not only traditional diplomatic institutions but also the expanding role of legislatures, civil society, business, academia and other non-executive actors.

The Congressional Study Group

The Congressional Study Group is conceived as a professional study, dialogue and exchange platform within the CPSS Africa–Lincoln Institute partnership.

Its purpose is to create a structured space for studying the relationship between legislatures and international affairs and for developing practical capabilities in parliamentary diplomacy. The Congressional Study Group may facilitate:

1

Study

Research and learning on parliamentary diplomacy; legislative diplomacy; congressional-parliamentary relations; foreign policy; international relations; regional integration; international organisations; legislative oversight of foreign affairs; international trade and economic diplomacy; peace and security; migration; development cooperation; comparative parliamentary practice; and emerging global issues.

2

Dialogue

Roundtables, seminars, policy conversations and professional discussions involving parliamentarians; parliamentary staff; diplomats; government officials; academics; researchers; civil society; private-sector representatives; and international partners.

3

Professional Development

Executive learning programmes and practical training in diplomatic communication; negotiation; protocol; international meeting management; country analysis; foreign policy; parliamentary engagement; strategic communication; and international partnership management.

4

Institutional Exchange

Facilitating structured learning and professional exchanges between legislatures and parliamentary institutions.

5

Research and Publications

Producing parliamentary diplomacy guides; policy briefs; comparative studies; country profiles; legislative diplomacy reports; parliamentary diplomacy newsletters; and analytical papers.

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY NOTE

The term “Congressional Study Group” in this publication refers to the professional study and exchange platform established through the CPSS Africa–Lincoln Institute partnership. It should not be understood as implying endorsement, representation, institutional affiliation with, or official sponsorship by the United States Congress or any particular congressional institution unless separately and formally stated.

Contents

I UNDERSTANDING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

01 What Is Parliamentary Diplomacy? 8
02 Why Parliamentary Diplomacy Matters 9
03 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy 10
04 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Executive Diplomacy 10
05 The Changing International Role of Legislatures 11

II THE PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMAT

06 The Role of the Parliamentarian in International Affairs 13
07 Diplomatic Skills for Legislators 13
08 Representation and Institutional Responsibility 14
09 Communication and Negotiation 14
10 Protocol and Cultural Intelligence 15

III THE ARCHITECTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

11 Leadership Diplomacy 17
12 Committee Diplomacy 17
13 Bilateral Parliamentary Relations 17
14 Parliamentary Friendship Groups 18
15 Regional Parliamentary Diplomacy 18
16 Continental Parliamentary Diplomacy 18
17 Global Parliamentary Diplomacy 19
18 Congressional-Parliamentary Relations 19

IV THE PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY CYCLE

19 Stage One — Identify 21
20 Stage Two — Assess 21
21 Stage Three — Authorise 21
22 Stage Four — Prepare 22
23 Stage Five — Engage 22
24 Stage Six — Report 23
25 Stage Seven — Follow Up 23
26 Stage Eight — Evaluate 23

V PRACTICAL PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

27 The Bilateral Visit 25
28 International Conferences 25
29 Parliamentary Meetings 26
30 Parliamentary Negotiation 26
31 Institutional Partnerships 26
32 Diplomatic Opportunities 27
33 Sensitive and Crisis Engagements 27

VI STRATEGIC AREAS OF PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

34 Foreign Policy 29
35 Trade and Economic Diplomacy 29
36 Peace and Security 29
37 Regional Integration 29
38 Migration 29
39 Climate and Environment 29
40 Global Health 29
41 Technology and Digital Diplomacy 30
42 Development Cooperation 30

VII PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

43 Ethics 32
44 Conflicts of Interest 32
45 Gifts and Hospitality 32
46 Confidentiality 32
47 Media and Social Media 33
48 Parliamentary Privilege 33
49 Use of Public Resources 33
50 Institutional Reputation 33

VIII INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

51 Mission Reports 35
52 Knowledge Management 35
53 Contact Management 35
54 Follow-Up Systems 35
55 Measuring Results 36
56 Annual Review 36

IX THE CONGRESSIONAL STUDY GROUP PROGRAMME

57 Purpose and Mandate 38
58 Study Programmes 38
59 Parliamentary Exchanges 38
60 Executive Education 39
61 Parliamentary Diplomacy Roundtables 39
62 Research and Publications 39

X THE PROFESSIONAL PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY MODEL

63 The Four-Tier Model 41
64 The Parliamentary Diplomacy Value Chain 41
65 The Four-Question Test 42

XI PRACTICAL TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

A1 Delegation Checklist 44
A2 Country Brief Template 44
A3 Meeting Brief Template 45
A4 Talking Points Template 45
A5 Mission Report Template 46
A6 Follow-Up Tracker 46
A7 Partnership Assessment 47
A8 Post-Engagement Evaluation 47
A9 Parliamentary Diplomacy Annual Calendar 48
A10 Parliamentary Diplomacy Self-Assessment 48

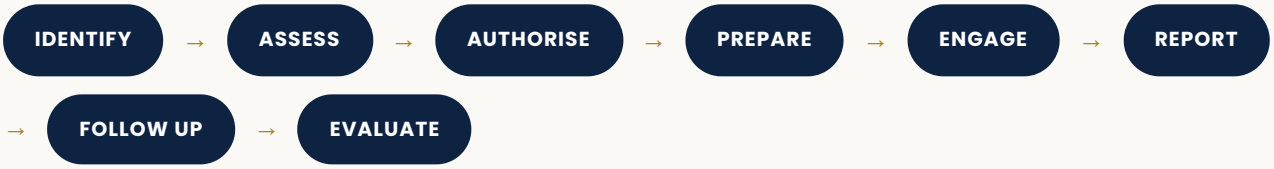
Executive Summary

Parliamentary diplomacy is the international engagement of legislatures and parliamentarians in pursuit of representative, legislative, institutional, diplomatic and national-interest objectives. It complements, rather than replaces, the traditional functions of Parliament.

A parliamentarian may participate in international affairs as:

- A representative of citizens
- A legislator
- An oversight actor
- A committee member
- A parliamentary leader
- A member of a parliamentary friendship group
- A participant in regional or international parliamentary organisations
- A member of a bilateral delegation
- An institutional ambassador of parliamentary relations

Effective parliamentary diplomacy therefore requires a deliberate institutional system. This Guide proposes an eight-stage parliamentary diplomacy cycle:



The cycle is intended to transform international parliamentary engagement from an event-based activity into a continuous institutional process.

> *A parliamentary engagement should not be measured only by where a delegation travelled or whom it met, but by what was learned, represented, negotiated, established, communicated and followed up.*

PART I

05 SECTIONS

PART ONE

Understanding Parliamentary Diplomacy

What parliamentary diplomacy is, why it matters, and how it relates to the work of the executive.

I

1. What Is Parliamentary Diplomacy?
2. Why Parliamentary Diplomacy Matters
3. Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy
4. Parliamentary Diplomacy and Executive Diplomacy
5. The Changing International Role of Legislatures

01 What Is Parliamentary Diplomacy?

Parliamentary diplomacy is the practice through which legislatures, parliamentary leaders, Members of Parliament and parliamentary institutions engage international counterparts and institutions in pursuit of parliamentary, representative, institutional and national objectives.

It includes:

- Bilateral parliamentary relations
- Regional parliamentary cooperation
- Continental parliamentary engagement
- Global parliamentary forums
- Committee-to-committee relations
- Parliamentary friendship groups
- Speaker and parliamentary leadership diplomacy
- Legislative exchanges
- International conferences
- Parliamentary study visits
- Multilateral dialogue
- Peacebuilding and conflict prevention
- Legislative learning
- International policy dialogue
- Parliamentary engagement with diplomatic and development partners

Parliamentary diplomacy operates alongside conventional executive diplomacy. It does not seek to replace the role of governments or foreign ministries in international relations. Instead, it creates an additional channel through which representative institutions can contribute to international engagement.

02 Why Parliamentary Diplomacy Matters

International affairs increasingly affect domestic legislative responsibilities. Issues such as trade, migration, climate change, public health, international security, development finance, technology, digital governance, food security, regional integration, taxation, investment, refugees and displacement, and international treaties often have direct consequences for citizens and national legislation.

Parliamentarians therefore require sufficient international awareness to understand how external developments affect their legislative and representative responsibilities. Parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to:

Representation

Providing opportunities for elected representatives to communicate the perspectives and concerns of their constituencies.

Legislative Learning

Enabling parliamentarians to learn from other legislatures about laws, institutions, procedures and policy responses.

Institutional Relations

Building durable relationships between parliamentary institutions.

Policy Dialogue

Providing a platform for parliamentarians to discuss shared challenges.

Peacebuilding

Supporting dialogue between representatives where political or social tensions exist.

Regional Integration

Strengthening parliamentary understanding and participation in regional processes.

International Cooperation

Creating opportunities for institutional cooperation, technical exchange and development partnerships.

National-Interest Engagement

Providing channels through which parliamentary engagement can contribute to broader national objectives.

03 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is not exclusively an executive subject. Parliament may engage foreign policy through:

- Legislative consideration
- Oversight
- Treaty-related responsibilities
- Budgetary processes
- Committee work
- International parliamentary relations
- Diplomatic engagement by parliamentary leadership
- Regional and continental institutions
- International conferences
- Parliamentary networks

A parliamentarian engaged in international affairs should therefore understand the distinction between:

> *Speaking personally — and speaking in an official parliamentary or national capacity.*

This distinction is central to professional parliamentary diplomacy. A Member of Parliament may express a personal political position where appropriate, but should not create the impression that an unauthorised personal position represents the formal position of Parliament or the State.

04 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Executive Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy and executive diplomacy are related but distinct.

EXECUTIVE DIPLOMACY	PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY
Primarily conducted by executive authorities and diplomatic services	Conducted by parliamentarians and parliamentary institutions
Government-to-government relations	Legislature-to-legislature and parliamentarian-to-parliamentarian relations
Often involves formal state representation	Combines representation, legislation, oversight and dialogue
Foreign policy implementation	Legislative engagement and international parliamentary relations
Diplomatic missions are central actors	Parliament, committees and parliamentary networks are central actors
Formal diplomatic channels	Formal and informal parliamentary channels

The two channels may complement each other. Professional parliamentary diplomacy should therefore seek coordination rather than institutional competition.

05 The Changing International Role of Legislatures

Modern legislatures operate within an increasingly interconnected international environment. Parliamentarians may encounter international questions in:

- Committee hearings
- Budget debates
- Treaty discussions
- Trade negotiations
- Regional parliamentary assemblies
- International conferences
- Bilateral exchanges
- Development programmes
- Migration discussions
- Peace and security forums
- Parliamentary friendship groups

This has created a growing need for parliamentarians to develop international policy literacy. The contemporary parliamentarian may therefore require both:

> *Legislative competence — and diplomatic competence.*

PART II

05 SECTIONS

PART TWO

The Parliamentary Diplomat

The roles, skills, communication discipline and protocol awareness expected of a parliamentarian engaged internationally.

II

6. The Role of the Parliamentarian in International Affairs
7. Diplomatic Skills for Legislators
8. Representation and Institutional Responsibility
9. Communication and Negotiation
10. Protocol and Cultural Intelligence

06 The Role of the Parliamentarian in International Affairs

A parliamentarian participating in international engagement may have several responsibilities simultaneously.

The Representative

Represent citizens and constituencies.

The Legislator

Understand how international experiences may inform legislation.

The Oversight Actor

Examine how international commitments and relationships affect public policy.

The Diplomatic Representative

Build constructive relationships with counterparts.

The Institutional Representative

Protect the dignity and credibility of Parliament.

The Policy Communicator

Explain national and parliamentary perspectives accurately.

The Learner

Bring relevant knowledge and comparative experience back to Parliament.

07 Diplomatic Skills for Legislators

Effective parliamentary diplomacy requires a combination of political, legislative and diplomatic skills. Important capabilities include:

- Active listening
- Negotiation
- Public speaking
- Analytical thinking
- Cultural intelligence
- Protocol
- Strategic communication
- Conflict sensitivity
- Policy analysis
- Relationship management
- Discretion
- Persuasion through evidence
- Coalition building
- Meeting management
- Professional writing

A parliamentarian does not cease to be a legislator when travelling internationally. The international engagement should remain connected to parliamentary responsibilities.

08 Representation and Institutional Responsibility

International engagements may create lasting perceptions about Parliament. Every delegation should therefore consider:

- Who are we representing?
- What authority do we have?
- What are we authorised to discuss?
- What can we commit to?
- What information can we disclose?
- What should be referred to the relevant authority?
- What must be reported after the engagement?

> *Represent with authority, speak with accuracy, listen with respect and commit only within mandate.*

09 Communication and Negotiation

Parliamentary diplomacy frequently involves dialogue rather than formal negotiation. Effective engagement requires:

BEFORE THE MEETING — KNOW:

- The participants
- Their institutional roles
- The subject
- The objectives
- The areas of agreement
- The areas of difference
- Relevant facts
- The desired outcome

DURING THE MEETING

- Listen carefully
- Avoid unnecessary confrontation
- Distinguish facts from assumptions
- Ask precise questions
- Acknowledge legitimate differences
- Avoid making commitments beyond authority

AFTER THE MEETING

- Document commitments
- Identify follow-up actions
- Communicate internally
- Maintain institutional contact

10 Protocol and Cultural Intelligence

Protocol is not merely ceremonial. It communicates respect. Parliamentarians should understand:

- Appropriate forms of address
- Seating arrangements
- Flags and national symbols
- Dress expectations
- Religious and cultural considerations
- Meeting etiquette
- Gift protocols
- Photography rules
- Security procedures
- Interpretation arrangements
- Host-country practices

Cultural intelligence requires more than memorising etiquette. It requires understanding that institutions may operate differently across countries.

PART III

08 SECTIONS

PART THREE

The Architecture of Parliamentary Diplomacy

The institutional channels through which parliamentary diplomacy is conducted — from leadership to committee, bilateral, regional and global levels.

III

11. Leadership Diplomacy
12. Committee Diplomacy
13. Bilateral Parliamentary Relations
14. Parliamentary Friendship Groups
15. Regional Parliamentary Diplomacy
16. Continental Parliamentary Diplomacy
17. Global Parliamentary Diplomacy
18. Congressional-Parliamentary Relations

11 Leadership Diplomacy

Parliamentary leaders often perform a high-level diplomatic role. This may include:

- Receiving foreign parliamentary delegations
- Visiting counterpart legislatures
- Participating in international parliamentary forums
- Signing institutional cooperation arrangements
- Representing Parliament at high-level events
- Supporting parliamentary dialogue during periods of tension

Leadership diplomacy can establish relationships that later support committee and technical cooperation.

12 Committee Diplomacy

Committees are among the most useful mechanisms for practical parliamentary diplomacy. Committee-to-committee engagement may focus on specific subjects such as:

- Foreign affairs
- Defence and security
- Trade
- Agriculture
- Health
- Education
- Finance
- Environment
- Migration
- Technology
- Regional integration

Committee diplomacy has a major advantage: it connects international engagement directly to legislative work.

13 Bilateral Parliamentary Relations

Bilateral parliamentary diplomacy involves structured engagement between two legislatures. It may include:

- Parliamentary delegations
- Speaker-to-Speaker engagements
- Committee exchanges
- Friendship groups
- Study visits
- Joint seminars
- Legislative exchanges
- Parliamentary cooperation agreements
- Reciprocal visits

Successful bilateral relations should be built around continuity. A relationship should not begin and end with one delegation visit.

14 Parliamentary Friendship Groups

Friendship groups can provide a continuing institutional channel between parliamentarians from different countries. They can:

- Maintain relationships
- Encourage legislative learning
- Facilitate cultural understanding
- Promote parliamentary dialogue
- Support economic and development discussions
- Identify areas for institutional cooperation

A friendship group should have a clear purpose and an appropriate mechanism for recording activities and follow-up.

15 Regional Parliamentary Diplomacy

Regional integration creates an important space for parliamentary diplomacy. Regional parliamentary engagement may address:

- Trade
- Infrastructure
- Migration
- Security
- Cross-border communities
- Natural resources
- Regional markets
- Health
- Education
- Political cooperation

Parliamentarians should understand the mandates and procedures of relevant regional institutions before participating in their activities.

16 Continental Parliamentary Diplomacy

At continental level, parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to African cooperation through:

- Legislative exchange
- Regional integration
- Peace and security
- Governance
- Development
- Human rights
- Trade
- Migration
- Institutional learning

Continental parliamentary engagement should connect international participation with concrete national and regional legislative interests.

17 Global Parliamentary Diplomacy

Global parliamentary engagement may occur through:

- International parliamentary organisations
- Global conferences
- Inter-parliamentary networks
- Multilateral forums
- Bilateral meetings on the margins of international events
- Thematic parliamentary networks

The large number of international forums makes prioritisation essential. Participation should be connected to a clear objective.

18 Congressional-Parliamentary Relations

Relations between national legislatures and congressional institutions can provide opportunities for learning and dialogue on:

- Legislative processes
- Committee systems
- Foreign policy
- Budget oversight
- National security
- Trade
- Development cooperation
- Technology
- International partnerships
- Democratic institutions

The Congressional Study Group provides a professional platform for examining such relationships through study, dialogue and exchange.

PART IV

08 SECTIONS

PART FOUR

The Parliamentary Diplomacy Cycle

An eight-stage institutional cycle that carries an engagement from identification through to evaluation.

IV

19. Stage One — Identify
20. Stage Two — Assess
21. Stage Three — Authorise
22. Stage Four — Prepare
23. Stage Five — Engage
24. Stage Six — Report
25. Stage Seven — Follow Up
26. Stage Eight — Evaluate

19 Stage One — Identify

Before accepting or initiating an international engagement, identify:

- The issue
- The counterpart
- The opportunity
- The proposed participants
- The institutional relevance
- The expected benefit

> *Ask: why should this engagement happen?*

20 Stage Two — Assess

Assess:

- Political context
- Diplomatic sensitivity
- Institutional mandate
- Stakeholder interests
- Risks
- Expected costs
- Expected benefits
- Timing
- Protocol requirements
- Information requirements

The assessment should determine whether the engagement is appropriate and how it should be structured.

21 Stage Three — Authorise

Appropriate institutional authority should be established before the engagement. The delegation should have:

- A clear mandate
- Defined participants
- Agreed objectives
- Terms of reference
- Logistical arrangements
- Reporting expectations

No delegation should rely on ambiguity concerning its mandate.

22 Stage Four — Prepare

Preparation should include four coordinated briefs:

COUNTRY BRIEF

- Political system
- Parliamentary system
- Economy
- Foreign policy
- Bilateral relations
- Key current issues
- Cultural considerations

PARLIAMENTARY PROFILE

- Composition
- Leadership
- Committees
- Legislative priorities
- International relations structure

MEETING BRIEF

- Participants
- Objectives
- Background
- Key messages
- Questions
- Sensitivities
- Desired outcomes

PROTOCOL BRIEF

- Forms of address
- Dress
- Seating
- Flags
- Gifts
- Security
- Interpretation

23 Stage Five — Engage

During engagement:

1. Establish rapport.
2. State the purpose clearly.
3. Listen actively.
4. Present key messages.
5. Ask informed questions.
6. Identify areas of common interest.
7. Clarify differences.
8. Record commitments.
9. Identify next steps.

The objective is not to dominate the meeting. The objective is to produce meaningful institutional dialogue.

24 Stage Six — Report

Every substantial parliamentary engagement should produce an institutional record. A mission report should capture:

- Purpose
- Delegation
- Meetings
- Issues discussed
- Outcomes
- Commitments
- Lessons
- Recommendations
- Responsible institutions
- Timelines

The report should be accessible to relevant parliamentary structures in accordance with applicable confidentiality requirements.

25 Stage Seven — Follow Up

Follow-up converts diplomacy into results. Each engagement should produce an action tracker.

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON / INSTITUTION	DEADLINE	STATUS
Send correspondence			
Share legislative information			
Arrange technical exchange			
Convene follow-up meeting			
Prepare policy brief			

26 Stage Eight — Evaluate

After an engagement, ask:

- Was the objective achieved?
- What was learned?
- What relationships were established?
- What commitments were made?
- What should happen next?
- Was the engagement cost-effective?
- What should be improved?
- What institutional knowledge should be retained?

Evaluation should inform future parliamentary diplomacy.

PART V

07 SECTIONS

PART FIVE

Practical Parliamentary Diplomacy

Applying the cycle to the recurring formats of parliamentary engagement — visits, conferences, meetings, negotiation and partnerships.

V

27. The Bilateral Visit
28. International Conferences
29. Parliamentary Meetings
30. Parliamentary Negotiation
31. Institutional Partnerships
32. Diplomatic Opportunities
33. Sensitive and Crisis Engagements

27 The Bilateral Visit

A bilateral parliamentary visit should have:

BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Delegation composition
- Terms of reference
- Programme
- Briefing
- Objectives
- Talking points
- Protocol preparation

DURING THE VISIT

- Punctuality
- Disciplined participation
- Accurate representation
- Professional conduct
- Systematic note-taking

AFTER THE VISIT

- Mission report
- Action tracker
- Correspondence
- Institutional briefing
- Evaluation

28 International Conferences

International conferences provide opportunities for:

- Knowledge exchange
- Networking
- Bilateral meetings
- Policy learning
- Coalition building
- Parliamentary visibility

However, conference participation should not be treated as an end in itself. Before attending, the delegate should identify:

- Which sessions matter?
- Which people should be met?
- Which issues should be raised?
- What relationships should be developed?
- What knowledge should return to Parliament?

29 Parliamentary Meetings

A professional parliamentary meeting should normally have:

1. Purpose
2. Agenda
3. Participants
4. Key messages
5. Questions
6. Note-taking
7. Agreed actions
8. Follow-up

The delegation should distinguish between:

- Information exchange
- Political dialogue
- Institutional negotiation
- Technical discussion
- Formal commitment

30 Parliamentary Negotiation

Parliamentary negotiation may occur in committee settings, bilateral exchanges, parliamentary organisations, institutional partnerships, regional forums, and international conferences.

Good negotiation requires:

- Preparation
- Clear objectives
- Knowledge of interests
- Listening
- Flexibility
- Understanding of constraints
- Accurate documentation

> *A negotiator should know the difference between what is desirable, what is possible, and what is authorised.*

31 Institutional Partnerships

Parliamentary diplomacy may generate opportunities for technical cooperation, research partnerships, staff exchanges, legislative learning, training, digital cooperation, committee cooperation and institutional capacity building.

Potential partnerships should be assessed carefully. Before entering a partnership, establish:

- Purpose
- Institutional benefit
- Responsibilities
- Resources
- Duration
- Reporting
- Confidentiality
- Review mechanisms

32 Diplomatic Opportunities

Parliamentary diplomacy is not limited to scheduled delegations. Opportunities can arise through:

- Foreign parliamentary visitors
- Diplomatic missions
- International organisations
- Universities
- Think tanks
- Development partners
- Civil society
- Business associations
- Diaspora networks
- Regional institutions

Parliamentary diplomacy should therefore include a system for identifying and managing diplomatic opportunities.

33 Sensitive and Crisis Engagements

Some international engagements involve heightened sensitivity. Examples may include:

- Political crises
- Armed conflict
- Disputed elections
- Diplomatic disputes
- Security incidents
- Humanitarian emergencies
- Sensitive bilateral issues

In such circumstances:

- Verify information
- Clarify mandate
- Coordinate appropriately
- Avoid speculation
- Respect confidentiality
- Distinguish personal views from institutional positions
- Avoid unauthorised commitments
- Maintain professional communication

PART VI

09 SECTIONS

PART SIX

Strategic Areas of Parliamentary Diplomacy

The principal policy fields in which parliamentary engagement most frequently intersects with legislative responsibility.

VI

34. Foreign Policy
35. Trade and Economic Diplomacy
36. Peace and Security
37. Regional Integration
38. Migration
39. Climate and Environment
40. Global Health
41. Technology and Digital Diplomacy
42. Development Cooperation

34 Foreign Policy

Parliamentary diplomacy can strengthen understanding of bilateral relations, regional alliances, multilateral institutions, international agreements, diplomatic priorities, and global geopolitical developments.

Parliamentarians should seek access to credible and current foreign-policy information before major international engagements.

35 Trade and Economic Diplomacy

International parliamentary engagement may address trade, investment, economic cooperation, market access, taxation, infrastructure, industrialisation and regional markets.

Parliamentarians should understand the difference between political advocacy, legislative action and formal government negotiation.

36 Peace and Security

Parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to dialogue, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, reconciliation, regional security cooperation and parliamentary oversight of security policy.

Parliamentarians can provide channels for communication where conventional diplomatic channels may be limited.

37 Regional Integration

Regional parliamentary diplomacy can contribute to understanding regional treaties, common markets, free movement, infrastructure, cross-border security, regional legislation and regional institutions.

The parliamentarian should connect regional engagement to domestic legislative responsibilities.

38 Migration

Migration is simultaneously a domestic and international issue. Parliamentary diplomacy can address labour migration, diaspora engagement, human trafficking, migrant protection, remittances, skills mobility, bilateral labour arrangements and migration governance.

International parliamentary engagement can support comparative learning and policy dialogue.

39 Climate and Environment

Climate diplomacy increasingly intersects with legislation. Parliamentary engagement may address climate finance, adaptation, environmental regulation, natural resources, renewable energy, food security and regional environmental cooperation.

40 Global Health

International health cooperation may involve public health, pandemic preparedness, health financing, pharmaceutical access, medical research and regional health cooperation.

Parliamentarians require sufficient technical briefing to distinguish evidence from advocacy.

41 Technology and Digital Diplomacy

Emerging areas include artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital governance, data protection, digital trade, technology transfer and innovation policy.

Parliamentarians increasingly need international comparative knowledge when legislating in these areas.

42 Development Cooperation

Parliamentary diplomacy can strengthen understanding of development finance, donor relations, South-South cooperation, technical assistance, infrastructure partnerships and development institutions.

International development partnerships should be considered in relation to national priorities, legislative responsibilities and public accountability.

PART VII

08 SECTIONS

PART SEVEN

Professional Standards

Standards of ethics, conduct and institutional accountability that apply to Members and staff engaged internationally.

VII

43. Ethics
44. Conflicts of Interest
45. Gifts and Hospitality
46. Confidentiality
47. Media and Social Media
48. Parliamentary Privilege
49. Use of Public Resources
50. Institutional Reputation

43 Ethics

Professional parliamentary diplomacy requires:

- Integrity
- Impartial institutional conduct
- Honesty
- Accountability
- Respect
- Responsible use of public resources

The parliamentarian should always consider whether conduct could undermine public confidence in Parliament.

44 Conflicts of Interest

International engagements can create actual, potential or perceived conflicts. Members and staff should comply with applicable:

- Parliamentary rules
- Laws
- Disclosure requirements
- Ethics requirements
- Institutional policies

Where uncertainty exists, appropriate institutional advice should be sought.

45 Gifts and Hospitality

Gifts and hospitality may be part of diplomatic culture. However, they should be handled in accordance with applicable rules. Delegates should consider:

- Value
- Purpose
- Transparency
- Institutional ownership
- Disclosure
- Record keeping

No gift or hospitality should create an inappropriate obligation.

46 Confidentiality

International meetings may involve sensitive information. Delegates should distinguish between:

- Public information
- Restricted information
- Confidential information
- Privileged information

Information should not be disclosed merely because it was obtained during an international engagement.

47 Media and Social Media

International parliamentary engagement increasingly occurs in a public communications environment. Before posting or speaking publicly, apply five questions:

ACCURACY
Is the information correct?

AUTHORITY
Am I authorised to speak on this matter?

CONFIDENTIALITY
Can this information be publicly disclosed?

CONTEXT
Could the statement be misunderstood without additional context?

INSTITUTIONAL REPUTATION
Could the communication unnecessarily undermine Parliament or the dignity of the engagement?

The same standards should apply to social media.

48 Parliamentary Privilege

Parliamentary privilege and immunities vary by jurisdiction and institutional context. Delegates should not assume that parliamentary privilege automatically applies outside their legislature or outside their country.

International engagements should therefore be conducted with awareness of the applicable legal and institutional environment.

49 Use of Public Resources

International parliamentary activities may involve public expenditure. Delegations should therefore demonstrate:

- Proper authorisation
- Transparency
- Financial discipline
- Appropriate procurement
- Accountability
- Value for institutional expenditure

The public should be able to understand the institutional purpose of significant international engagements.

50 Institutional Reputation

Every international engagement contributes to how a legislature is perceived. Professional conduct includes:

- Punctuality
- Appropriate dress
- Preparation
- Courtesy
- Respect
- Accuracy
- Confidentiality
- Disciplined communication

Institutional reputation is built through repeated behaviour.

PART VIII

06 SECTIONS

PART EIGHT

Institutional Learning and Knowledge Management

Turning individual engagements into durable institutional knowledge that survives changes in parliamentary membership.

VIII

51. Mission Reports
52. Knowledge Management
53. Contact Management
54. Follow-Up Systems
55. Measuring Results
56. Annual Review

51 Mission Reports

Mission reports should become institutional knowledge rather than administrative paperwork. A useful report should answer:

- What happened?
- Why did it matter?
- What was learned?
- What was agreed?
- Who is responsible?
- What happens next?

52 Knowledge Management

Parliamentary diplomacy generates valuable institutional knowledge. A knowledge-management system should preserve:

- Country briefs
- Parliamentary profiles
- Meeting reports
- Delegation reports
- Agreements
- Contact information
- Institutional histories
- Lessons learned
- Follow-up actions

This reduces duplication and ensures that institutional knowledge survives changes in parliamentary membership.

53 Contact Management

A structured contact system can record:

- Name
- Institution
- Country
- Position
- Areas of interest
- Previous engagement
- Agreed actions
- Next contact
- Responsible parliamentary office

Contacts should be managed in accordance with applicable data-protection and confidentiality requirements.

54 Follow-Up Systems

A diplomatic relationship requires continuity. Every significant engagement should identify:

> *WHO will do WHAT, by WHEN.*

The follow-up system should be periodically reviewed.

55 Measuring Results

Parliamentary diplomacy should be evaluated through outcomes rather than travel statistics alone. Possible indicators include:

- Number of substantive institutional exchanges
- Legislative learning outcomes
- Policy briefs produced
- Committee-to-committee engagements
- Institutional partnerships established
- Follow-up actions completed
- Diplomatic relationships maintained
- Knowledge products generated
- Professional training completed
- Lessons incorporated into parliamentary practice

Indicators should be adapted to the purpose of each programme.

56 Annual Review

At the end of each year, the relevant parliamentary diplomacy structure should consider:

- Engagements undertaken
- Objectives achieved
- Unresolved commitments
- Institutional relationships
- Costs
- Lessons
- Emerging international priorities
- Future opportunities

The annual review should inform the next parliamentary diplomacy calendar.

PART IX

06 SECTIONS

PART NINE

The Congressional Study Group Programme

The applied study, exchange and research activities delivered through the Congressional Study Group platform.

IX

57. Purpose and Mandate
58. Study Programmes
59. Parliamentary Exchanges
60. Executive Education
61. Parliamentary Diplomacy Roundtables
62. Research and Publications

57 Purpose and Mandate

The Congressional Study Group provides a structured platform for:

- Studying legislative diplomacy
- Strengthening parliamentary diplomatic capacity
- Promoting comparative legislative learning
- Facilitating professional exchange
- Examining congressional-parliamentary relations
- Connecting parliamentarians and experts
- Generating policy knowledge

Its work should remain practical and oriented toward professional application.

58 Study Programmes

The Study Group may organise programmes on:

Parliamentary Diplomacy

Understanding the theory and practice of legislative international engagement.

Foreign Policy for Legislators

Understanding national foreign-policy processes and international strategic environments.

Diplomatic Negotiation

Building practical negotiation and communication skills.

Legislative Oversight of International Affairs

Examining parliamentary roles in foreign affairs, treaties, international agreements and related policy areas.

Geopolitics for Parliamentarians

Understanding major geopolitical developments and their implications for national interests.

Regional Integration

Examining regional institutions, legal frameworks and parliamentary roles.

Economic and Trade Diplomacy

Understanding international trade, investment and development relations.

59 Parliamentary Exchanges

The Study Group may support structured exchanges involving:

- Parliamentarians
- Parliamentary staff
- Legislative researchers
- Diplomats
- Academics
- Policy experts

Exchanges should have defined learning objectives and appropriate reporting mechanisms.

60 Executive Education

Executive programmes may be developed for parliamentarians and parliamentary professionals in:

- Parliamentary diplomacy
- International relations
- Foreign policy
- Diplomatic negotiation
- Protocol
- Geopolitical analysis
- Strategic communication
- International economic relations

The programmes should combine classroom learning with practical case studies and simulations.

61 Parliamentary Diplomacy Roundtables

Regular roundtables may bring together practitioners and experts to discuss emerging issues. Possible themes include:

- Africa and changing global power relations
- Parliamentary diplomacy and national interest
- Regional integration
- International trade
- Migration diplomacy
- Peace and security
- Technology and AI governance
- Development partnerships
- Legislative diplomacy in a multipolar world

62 Research and Publications

The Congressional Study Group may produce:

- Parliamentary Diplomacy Briefs
- Legislative Diplomacy Papers
- Country Parliamentary Profiles
- Congressional-Parliamentary Relations Papers
- Parliamentary Diplomacy Annual Reviews
- Diplomatic Practice Guides
- Training manuals
- Policy briefs

Research should support both professional learning and institutional dialogue.

PART X

03 SECTIONS

PART TEN

The Professional Parliamentary Diplomacy Model

A single operating model — four tiers, a value chain and a four-question test — that ties the whole Guide together.

X

63. The Four-Tier Model
64. The Parliamentary Diplomacy Value Chain
65. The Four-Question Test

63 The Four-Tier Model

A parliamentary diplomacy system can be organised around four interconnected levels.

I

Leadership Diplomacy

Speaker and parliamentary leadership engagements.

II

Institutional Parliamentary Diplomacy

Formal relations between parliamentary institutions.

III

Committee and Thematic Diplomacy

Subject-specific engagement by committees and parliamentarians.

IV

Professional Parliamentary Diplomacy

Research, protocol, administration, knowledge management and technical support.

The four tiers should reinforce one another.

64 The Parliamentary Diplomacy Value Chain

A professional parliamentary diplomacy system can be understood as a sequence of six linked stages.



INPUT
Information, mandate, resources and institutional priorities.

PREPARATION
Research, briefing, objectives and protocol.

ENGAGEMENT
Meetings, dialogue, negotiation and relationship building.

OUTCOME
Knowledge, agreements, commitments, relationships or policy insights.

FOLLOW-UP
Action tracking and communication.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING
Documentation, evaluation and improvement.

65 The Four-Question Test

Before approving or undertaking a major parliamentary diplomatic engagement, ask:

QUESTION 1

Why?

Why is this engagement necessary?

QUESTION 2

Who?

Who should participate?

QUESTION 3

What?

What specific outcome is expected?

QUESTION 4

After?

What happens after the delegation returns?

If these four questions cannot be answered clearly, the engagement requires further preparation.

PART XI

10 SECTIONS

PART ELEVEN

Practical Tools and Templates

Ready-to-use working templates. Reproduce these pages for delegation use, or adapt them to institutional systems.

XI

1. Delegation Checklist
2. Country Brief Template
3. Meeting Brief Template
4. Talking Points Template
5. Mission Report Template
6. Follow-Up Tracker
7. Partnership Assessment
8. Post-Engagement Evaluation
9. Parliamentary Diplomacy Annual Calendar
10. Parliamentary Diplomacy Self-Assessment

ANNEX 1

Delegation Checklist

BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ☐ Mandate confirmed
- ☐ Delegation approved
- ☐ Objectives defined
- ☐ Terms of reference prepared
- ☐ Country brief prepared
- ☐ Parliamentary profile prepared
- ☐ Meeting briefs prepared
- ☐ Talking points prepared
- ☐ Questions prepared
- ☐ Protocol reviewed
- ☐ Security arrangements confirmed
- ☐ Travel arrangements confirmed
- ☐ Reporting requirements communicated

DURING ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Objectives maintained
- ☐ Key messages delivered
- ☐ Questions addressed
- ☐ Commitments recorded
- ☐ Contacts recorded
- ☐ Follow-up actions identified

AFTER RETURN

- ☐ Mission report completed
- ☐ Action tracker prepared
- ☐ Relevant offices briefed
- ☐ Correspondence initiated
- ☐ Lessons documented
- ☐ Evaluation completed

ANNEX 2

Country Brief Template

COUNTRY _____

CAPITAL _____

POLITICAL SYSTEM _____

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM _____

HEAD OF STATE/GOVERNMENT _____

PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP _____

KEY ISSUES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

BILATERAL RELATIONS

- ☐ Political relations
- ☐ Economic relations
- ☐ Trade
- ☐ Development cooperation
- ☐ Security cooperation
- ☐ Cultural relations
- ☐ Parliamentary relations

PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

- ☐ Legislature
- ☐ Chambers
- ☐ Committees
- ☐ Parliamentary leadership
- ☐ Major legislative priorities

CULTURAL AND PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ Forms of address
- ☐ Dress
- ☐ Meeting etiquette
- ☐ Religious considerations
- ☐ Gift protocol
- ☐ Sensitive subjects

ANNEX 3 Meeting Brief Template

DATE _____ VENUE _____ COUNTERPART _____

INSTITUTION _____ DELEGATION _____

KEY MESSAGES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

QUESTIONS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

PURPOSE

BACKGROUND

AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST

SENSITIVE ISSUES

DESIRED OUTCOMES

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

ANNEX 4 Talking Points Template

OPENING

- ☐ Appreciation
- ☐ Purpose of engagement
- ☐ Shared interests

CLOSING

- ☐ Areas of agreement
- ☐ Next steps
- ☐ Appreciation

MAIN MESSAGES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ISSUES TO RAISE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ISSUES TO AVOID OR HANDLE CAREFULLY

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ANNEX 5

Mission Report Template

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY MISSION REPORT

DELEGATION _____ COUNTRY _____ DATES _____

PURPOSE _____

01. BACKGROUND

02. OBJECTIVES

03. MEETINGS UNDERTAKEN

04. ISSUES DISCUSSED

05. KEY OUTCOMES

06. COMMITMENTS

07. LESSONS LEARNED

08. RECOMMENDATIONS

10. CONCLUSION

09/10 · FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	STATUS
1			
2			
3			

ANNEX 6

Follow-Up Tracker

NO.	COMMITMENT / ACTION	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	DEADLINE	PROGRESS	NEXT STEP
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

ANNEX 7

Partnership Assessment

Before establishing an institutional partnership, consider:

Strategic Relevance	Does the partnership support parliamentary or institutional priorities?
Institutional Value	What concrete benefit will result?
Capacity	Does the partner have the expertise and resources required?
Sustainability	Can the relationship continue beyond one activity?
Governance	Who is responsible for implementation?
Accountability	How will activities and resources be reported?
Review	When will the partnership be evaluated?

ANNEX 8

Post-Engagement Evaluation

STRATEGIC

- ☐ Did the engagement have a clear purpose?
- ☐ Was it aligned with institutional priorities?

DIPLOMATIC

- ☐ Were relationships strengthened?
- ☐ Were sensitive issues handled appropriately?

LEGISLATIVE

- ☐ What legislative knowledge was gained?
- ☐ What comparative practices are relevant?

INSTITUTIONAL

- ☐ What partnerships or institutional opportunities emerged?

OPERATIONAL

- ☐ Was preparation adequate?
- ☐ Was the delegation properly supported?

FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ What remains outstanding?

ANNEX 9 Parliamentary Diplomacy Annual Calendar

A parliamentary diplomacy calendar should identify:

MONTH	ENGAGEMENT	INSTITUTION / COUNTRY	THEME	LEAD	PREPARATION DEADLINE
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					

ANNEX 10 Parliamentary Diplomacy Self-Assessment

Before participating in an international engagement, the parliamentarian should be able to answer:

KNOWLEDGE

- ☐ Do I understand the issue?
- ☐ Do I understand the counterpart's institution?
- ☐ Do I understand the country's political and diplomatic context?

REPRESENTATION

- ☐ Do I know whom I am representing?
- ☐ What am I authorised to communicate?

DIPLOMACY

- ☐ Can I communicate disagreement respectfully?
- ☐ Can I listen without prematurely responding?
- ☐ Can I identify common interests?

PROTOCOL

- ☐ Do I understand the relevant cultural and diplomatic expectations?

FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ What should happen after the engagement?

Towards a Professional Culture of Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is not simply the international travel of parliamentarians. It is a professional function of legislative international engagement.

Its value lies in the ability of legislatures and parliamentarians to:

- Represent citizens internationally
- Develop institutional relationships
- Exchange legislative knowledge
- Contribute to policy dialogue
- Support peace and cooperation
- Understand international developments
- Strengthen regional and global partnerships
- Bring international knowledge back into domestic legislative work

For parliamentary diplomacy to produce lasting value, it must move beyond isolated events. It requires:

1. Preparation before engagement.
2. Professional conduct during engagement.
3. Reporting after engagement.
4. Follow-up after reporting.
5. Institutional learning after follow-up.

The ultimate measure of parliamentary diplomacy is therefore not the number of meetings held or countries visited. It is the extent to which international engagement contributes to knowledge, relationships, representation, institutional cooperation, legislative learning and constructive international engagement.

The CPSS Africa–Lincoln Institute partnership, through the Congressional Study Group, provides a platform for advancing this professional approach. The objective is to develop parliamentarians and parliamentary professionals who are capable of operating confidently at the intersection of legislation, diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations.

> *Prepare well. Represent responsibly. Engage professionally. Document systematically. Follow up consistently. Learn institutionally.*

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

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