



# Science Diplomacy and Role of Civil Society in Armenia: The Case of UYSSA



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## Introduction

Modern Science forms a person's worldview, is closely connected with technological progress and helps to make predictions for the development of society and the development of programs, to solve problems facing humanity. Science is also diplomacy. The diplomacy of science is designed to resolve issues on the principle of soft power in such a way that weapons are not used for this purpose. But is science always safe for humanity? Unfortunately, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were also created as a result of the development of science, while the funds spent on the creation of weapons could be directed to fight against poverty and disease or to other socially useful purposes.

Diplomatic relations cannot and should not differ from research concepts and practices. At the same time, international relations can influence the diplomatic mission of science, turning science into a kind of successor to diplomacy, or a leading link. International scientific programs implemented in different countries help stakeholders to communicate with each other, exchange scientific information, as well as get acquainted with the culture and achievements of science of the country. The important components of the formation of scientific culture - in different countries are the exchange of scientific resources (personnel, equipment, experience in the organisation of scientific research, etc.), the implementation of joint scientific projects and expansion of scientific ties that contribute to the development of relations between these countries.

High mobility of science and scientific personnel is a precondition for effective development of science both today and tomorrow. Scientific ties between countries are formed and developed primarily by scientists themselves, acting in their countries as kinds of ambassadors of science.

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It is closer to our understanding of the current definitions of science diplomacy. According to Nina V. Fedoroff, Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary of State and to the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, “Science diplomacy is the use of scientific interactions among nations to address the common problems facing humanity and to build constructive, knowledge-based international partnerships” (Fedoroff, 2009). Science diplomacy, in the age of accelerating science and technology, is increasingly becoming a central element of the foreign policy and soft power and is emerging as an active area of study and policy considerations (Sikka, 2017).

Scientists and diplomats have different training and ways of thinking. Diplomats are risk-averse, change-resistant, practical, and focused on argumentation, persuasion, and influence. Scientists are risk-tolerant; they value experimentation, trial and error, and discovery and change (Hosker, 2016).

## The Importance of Science for the State

The role of science in modern society is undeniable and it plays an important role in many sectors and spheres of human life. The more developed the country, the more attention it pays to science, directing scientific knowledge to improve people’s lives and technological progress. And, undoubtedly, the level of development of science can serve as one of the main indicators of economic, cultural, civilised, educated, modern development of society. Everything around man is the achievement of science. Science is a bridge between nations and peoples to establish and develop relations, and it does not matter whether the country is recognised by the international community or not.

As Zafra Margolin Lerman mentioned, “Borders are only lines on a map. Nature and the environment don’t recognise these borders, and therefore, issues of climate change, air pollution, water quality and diseases require collaborations among nations for their solutions - only science diplomacy will succeed in solving such issues” (Lerman, 2015).

The state is a living organism and the active and effective functioning of its individual elements is essential for its normal functioning. As an example, we present the example we set up for

our organisation – “Union of Young Scientists and Specialists of Artsakh”, an NGO was founded in 2015, January 13. The aim of the Union is to unite young scientists and specialists from Republic Artsakh and Armenia to promote their professional growth and international integration. It should be noted that in Artsakh we were the first to speak about science diplomacy and continue to develop this direction with our activities.

People in the Republic of Artsakh are also engaged in science and, like other nations of the world, have equal rights to present and disseminate the results of their research and communicate with their colleagues.

Based on the three effective programs presented below, we show that through consistent work, a non-governmental scientific organisation can contribute to scientific research in the country and contribute to enhancing the scientific climate.

## Annual International Youth Scientific Conference: The Past, Present and Future of Armenian Statehood

Since 2016, every year in September the Union organises the “International Youth Scientific Conference: The Past, Present and Future of the Armenian Statehood” in the capital of Artsakh Stepanakert, and the fifth conference will hold on September 24-27 this year (UYSSA, 2020). During the previous four years, more than 360 scientists and specialists with fairly wide geography participated in the Conference, with the number of participants increasing from year to year (Armenia, Artsakh, Belarus, Germany, France, Poland, Russia, South Ossetia, Ukraine, and USA). In general, the Conference was attended by more than 360 well-known and young scientists from more than a dozen countries. Of course, this event is important not so much numerically as in terms of content.

The project is topical in terms of Artsakh international recognition and development of science diplomacy in the country. The fact that such a large-scale and purposeful event will be organised in Artsakh for the fifth time stands for the relevance of the idea, necessity, importance and diversity of scientific results, the scientific and practical significance and mission of the Conference.

The purpose of the Annual Youth Conference is to transform the achievements and theoretical and practical problems of the statehood in general, and Armenian statehood into particular into the materials for scientific research, as well as to provide the scientific substantiation of the range of tasks that can be of practical importance in the development of a strategy to confront modern challenges in various fields. The main mission of UYSSA is to make Artsakh recognizable to the world through science diplomacy, to raise the share of scientific thought, to ensure a worthy change of generations in science, to provide a platform for high-quality specialists and, thus, to promote the development and popularization of science, which is the organization of the above-mentioned conference fully aimed at.

The conference is a unique platform where the prominent scientists of the world come together along with the young and promising representatives of the sphere from Artsakh and acquire the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues concerning Artsakh and Armenia. The project provides the possibility for the participants to enlarge the sides of cooperation and to work out mutual research programs.

By means of the project, the professional growth of the Artsakh young scientists and specialists is assured as well as the cooperation links with the representatives of the spheres from different countries are provided.

Back in 2016, we proposed to establish the Institute of Artsakh Science Ambassador and in 2019 the first ranks and gold medals of Artsakh Science Ambassador were awarded to two prominent representatives of science from Germany and Poland.

## Artsakh E-Library

The aim of Artsakh E-Library lies in gathering academic and fictional library on Artsakh thus making the website a credible source of information on Artsakh for international visitors, enhancing the research on Artsakh as well as fighting against fake information flow on Artsakh conflict, state-building and other aspects.

The “Artsakh E-Library” website ([www.artsakhlib.am](http://www.artsakhlib.am)) was created in 2018. To this day, the multidisciplinary database of the site contains more than 6.200 materials. About 50,000 visitors of the site viewed the pages more than 200,000 times, which is a good indicator for the newly created electronic library. Browsing the literature from the site is for free. AEL also has a Facebook page with about 3,000 likes, as well as a working group which periodically publishes the site’s information resources. The website provides the opportunity to subscribe to it for both Armenian and foreign scientists and representatives of the sphere which in its turn develops a platform for cooperation and communication between the users.

The most important principle of the AEL replenishment is the continuity and diversification of sources of replenishment of the collection. The importance of the program is primarily due to the fact that the site contains informative materials about both Artsakh and Armenia, which are distributed through social networks, providing visitors with the necessary information. By the way, members of the organization assist persons applied by e-mail or social networks in the search and provision of materials. It should be noted that the organization has agreements with Armenian Universities, several publishers, individual periodicals, as well as with foreign universities and Think Tanks that provide their materials to AEL for their further promotion.

Artsakh E-Library also promotes the development of scientific thinking among students, young scientists and those who deal with science.

The project is topical in terms of Artsakh international recognition and development of science diplomacy in the country. At the same time, the materials on the website are available for FREE for everyone. The ideology of the project lies in the fact that the information should be available for free for those who deal with science and education, namely pupils, students, teachers, lecturer, PhD students, researchers etc.

## The trilingual “Scientific Artsakh” journal

The trilingual “Scientific Artsakh” journal of the organization has been published since 2018. The Founder is Yerevan State University and its

publication is recommended by the Scientific Council of YSU. The Journal is one of the few Artsakh journals included in the list of “Scientific publications acceptable for publication of the main results and theses” approved by the Republic of Armenia High Attestation Committee and is published 4 times a year. A total amount of 120 articles presented by scientists from more than 10 countries for four issues is expected to be published during the year.

Among other priorities, “Scientific Artsakh” is intended to provide the international community with exclusively objective information about the problems of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as to promote Artsakh abroad through science. «Scientific Artsakh» is, so to speak, our non-shooting, but having a large circle of influence «weapon», which should be spread as far as possible in many countries.

Both Armenian and foreign authors can publish scientific works in the journal. Scientists from Republic of Armenia, Republic of Artsakh, Germany, Switzerland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Poland, South Ossetia, Russian Federation, USA, Belarus, and Ukraine has already published their researches in the journal. The involvement of foreign scientists corresponds to the mission of the UYSSA, so the main result of our work should be that foreigners, saying “Artsakh”, do not understand the conflict, but the country endowed with all the qualities inherent in the state and not yet recognized at the international level, where people live and create, as well as are engaged in science. Presentation to the international community in such a way will favourably change the perception of Artsakh’s independent existence and self-sacrifice. We also continue to reach reasonable agreements with reputable foreign scientists to publish their scientific works in our journal. At the same time, with the assistance of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Artsakh and Armenia, we can widely disseminate and popularize the “Scientific Artsakh”. The online version of the journal is also available to readers.

The prominent scientists of the world provide their articles for the publication in “Scientific Artsakh” journal thus promoting the international

recognition of Artsakh by means of scientific recognition. The e-articles of the journal are available on Artsakh E-Library website for free.

The project itself is a huge contribution to the development of science diplomacy in Artsakh and promotion to the international recognition of Artsakh by means of science.

## Conclusion

Summing up, I want to believe that science diplomacy can contribute to the establishment of peace in the world, the formation of good neighbourly relations between peoples, the preservation and sustainable development of the planet Earth. In conclusion, it is appropriate to mention the following winged words of the political and spiritual leader of India Mahatma Gandhi: “We are destroyed by seven deadly sins... Science without humanity... Politics without principle, Commerce without morality, Worship without sacrifice...”.

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