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Geneva E-diplomacy Day: Opportunities and Challenges for Diplomacy in the Internet Era

Should diplomats blog? Should ambassadors be on Facebook? How can we manage the avalanche of social media info facing us each day? Can diplomats negotiate effectively online? Can we learn diplomacy online? Is e-communication protected by diplomatic immunities?

These and other questions on the impact of the Internet on diplomacy were addressed by more than 100 diplomats and technologists at the Geneva E-diplomacy Day (16th November 2012).

In the series of panels, roundtables and workshops, participants were engaged in discussing hype and reality in e-diplomacy. They explored the ways diplomacy as a profession can adjust to the Internet era. Swiss Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Alexandre Fasel, presented the Swiss experience in using ch@world as a set of e-tools for coordinating multilateral diplomatic initiatives. Richard Boly, the director of eDiplomacy at the US State Department, provided a summary of the way social media tools have been integrated in the work of US diplomacy. Anders Norsker, from the ITU, discussed remote participation as a way for increasing inclusiveness in multilateral diplomacy. Jovan Kurbalija, from DiploFoundation, questioned the applicability of traditional diplomatic immunities to the protection of diplomatic documents and communication in the Internet cloud.

The E-diplomacy day was organised by the Permanent Missions of Switzerland and Malta to the United Nations, DiploFoundation, the International Telecommunication Union and the Geneva Centre of Security Policy. It is a bottom-up initiative aimed at providing space for discussing the impact of the Internet on modern diplomacy. Further E-diplomacy days in 2013 will focus on issues such as online learning for diplomats, remote participation or organisation of diplomatic social campaigns. Besides Geneva, E-diplomacy days are organised in other major diplomatic centres throughout the world. For more information on E-diplomacy Days please consult: http://www.diplomacy.edu/e-diplomacy