

FOREIGN MINISTRIES MUST APPOINT HEALTH ATTACHES AROUND EMBASSIES WORLDWIDE

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The craft of global health diplomacy

Nothing has influenced global health diplomacy and international relations as decisively and at the same time as ambivalently as COVID-19 in our lifetime. This has spurred world faith that if we need to re-emerge from the ashes of a lockdown, we need to apply moral prescriptions of public health and regional co-operation required to build a future that includes all.

The craft of global health diplomacy must serve to inform the international world order that a balance of power and furtherance of ideals should not depend on nuclear determinants of countries or military alliances but rather be based on collective global health security and public health in all policies to address cascading risks. The world at large faces cascading risks which require new algorithms to address it. The risk faced from extreme weather events, natural disasters, climate change, migration and refugee crisis and overall public health consequences are far too serious a problem to handle and even greater threat to humanity than economic and strategic co-operation.

Health Attaches at Embassies around the world

Foreign Ministries must embrace the challenges of global health as a necessary ingredient to shape protection and their own civilian interest. Setting up Health Attache would enable countries to

network on shared data, work with humanitarian organizations, interface bilateral diplomatic programmes in the development sector, open further window for assistance among two or more nations and further international global health co-operation. For too long countries have been trying to establish Honorary Consuls but it would be wiser for foreign governments to appoint Health Attache to their Embassies by identifying local talent. Our world today appears torn between obsessive insecurity and proselytizing zeal between requirements in trade and defence as against the temptations of global public health in the quest for a new world order. With Artificial intelligence penetrating health innovation, and diseases assuming trans-boundary nature, visionary government offices and external affairs ministries must urgently set up diplomatic protocols factoring in health attaches.

The same international orders that emerged from the convention at Vienna, to that of the treaty of Versailles or the peace of Westphalia or even modern day Alma-Ata Declaration or the World Health Assembly, now needs to reconcile to constitute global health attaches to further regional co-operation and shared interests.

Health attaches need not go through formal diplomatic training as the problems of a career diplomat are imposed on him whereas the perspective of a health attache will be built on evidence based public health thereby leading to risk informed solution that benefits governments and regional neighbours.

Managing change, furthering scientific diplomacy

It is implied that as children of this universe, no matter who we are and what our ambitions may be, healthcare remains a cornerstone to human survival and progress. This pandemic is a reason for optimism and innovation provided we are humble enough to listen and learn. Positioning health attache in foreign embassies around the world presents an opportunity for wise nations to be grateful, to be faithful under all circumstances, to create generous bilateral co-operation and leapfrog public health science around the world and to promote even interests in the long term not just for selected nations, but as a unified world order. This would also in a way help negotiate legitimacy in pharmaceuticals, support translational and inter-disciplinary science, promote medical and health tourism, build inter-sectoral co-ordination among non-government actors and also foster world class diplomacy that can be of strategic interests as a shared future.

Positioning a country prepared to manage change and sending its officials to foreign missions open to flexibility requires a kind of diplomatic value not easily matched and also one that is built on vision instead of a historical imperative of the past. Additionally implementing public health and skilled global health diplomacy requires the realization that reality of failure in good many number of evidence based public health initiatives can be real. But building the narrative on prudence where convergence is possible, new algorithms are achievable and that new principles of public health can

be implemented with fresh zeal makes for useful conversations which Embassies worldwide can cultivate.

There has been so much advancement in science now than ever before, and healthcare has been changing each day. Given this notion, Ministries of Foreign Affairs across every nation must start to deploy Health Attache in every embassy and consulate for the greater glory of diplomacy and shared interests for one health, one world.

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