

Swissnex for the Planet

A new planetary diplomacy

In 2024, Swissnex launched an initiative to reimagine diplomatic practice through a planetary lens. This laboratory for planetary diplomacy seeks to represent the interests of nonhuman entities alongside human concerns, challenging traditional diplomatic frameworks.

For centuries, state diplomacy has exclusively represented governments and citizens. Recent decades have expanded this model, introducing specialized diplomatic approaches: science diplomacy, human rights diplomacy, technology diplomacy, and health diplomacy, among others. Since its founding in 2000 as the world's first science consulate, Swissnex has been at the forefront of growing the circles of actors involved in the international exchange of ideas, with a specific focus on researchers, innovators, and artists.

In this new wider playing field, environmental diplomacy has emerged as one key effort – primarily aimed to secure human civilization's future on the planet. Yet emerging research also reveals a profound interconnectedness between non-human and human systems on the planet. A growing interdisciplinary ecosystem – drawing from scientific research as well as indigenous knowledge – argues that humanity must become true stewards of planetary systems. This perspective challenges the Enlightenment's sharp ontological divide between humans and nonhumans, revealing instead complex networks of nonhuman communication and interdependence.

Emerging scholarship and knowledge-making across disciplines is reshaping our understanding in many ways:

- Natural scientists are uncovering unprecedented forms of nonhuman sociality
- Legal scholars are developing novel frameworks to protect nonhuman entities
- Environmental humanities are reframing human narratives through planetary consciousness
- Indigenous knowledge traditions offer long-standing models of radical interdependence

Swissnex's mission in incubating planetary diplomacy focuses on a critical 21st-century challenge: developing scientific, legal, and moral frameworks to represent the interests of Earth and all its inhabitants. This approach demands epistemic humility and a radical reimagining of diplomatic practice.

- **Foregrounding Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge** How can planetary diplomacy promote the findings of scientific and indigenous knowledge that restructures our view of humans' ecological relationship with planet earth?
- **Diplomacy and 'Rights of Nature'** A key component of diplomatic representation is to protect the rights and interests of its subjects. What does it look like to extend rights to nonhuman entities, and how could it be achieved practically through existing or new diplomatic channels?
- **Planetary Politics vs. Diplomacy** As calls emerge for forms of planetary governance, what specific role does diplomacy, with its focus on dialogue, compromise, and common interests, have to play?
- **The Role of State and Non-State Actors** How can traditional institutions of diplomacy, as well as NGOs and purpose-driven coalitions, play complementary roles in extending their representation to non-human entities?