

First executive training course on Global Health Diplomacy in China

19.08.2009 Graduate Institute and Beijing University join forces in Global Health Diplomacy course.



Dr. Ilona Kickbusch (right) and Dr. Nick Drager with some of the local course faculty

From 10 to 14 August 2009, the Global Health Programme of the Institute and the Institute for Global Health at Beijing University, with the support of the Chinese Ministry of Health and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, organised the first ever executive education training course on Global Health Diplomacy in Beijing, China.

This 5-day event, which brought together more than 30 participants from health and foreign affairs departments in China, was designed to introduce participants to key issues and challenges in global health and to build capacity and promote China's role and participation in global health negotiations. In particular, the course focused on learning by sharing. Several lecturers, who are themselves health negotiators, described their own negotiation techniques and experiences. They imparted to students some practical tools which they could take and apply to their own contexts before, during and after talks.

Participants heard from Brazilian health diplomats who shared their experiences in global health negotiations from the perspective of an emerging economy. Ambassador Alcazar discussed Brazil's emerging foreign policy role and diplomatic involvement in health issues and Dr. Felix Rosenberg described the Brazilian model for national level cooperation on global health. The relevance of this model to China – as a fellow member of the newly emerging BRICs economies – was discussed in some detail along with the possibilities for building new health alliances. In the final panel Dr. Ren Minghui, Director of the Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Health, China and Mr. Yang Xiaokun from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the steps China is taking in this direction.

In addition, models from Switzerland, US, UK and EU were presented as national and regional examples of health diplomacy in an effort to encourage Chinese participants to reflect upon the current organisation of health action and make the argument for the value of coordinating global health action. The training was intended to help Chinese health practitioners and negotiators to better deal with global health issues and to eventually become leaders in regional and global health. Other topics discussed over the five days included the emergence of new actors in global health governance, South-South health cooperation, global health agreements and global health policies.

Among the speakers who addressed the course and delivered key-note addresses were China's Vice-Minister of Health, Dr. Huang Jiefu, Secretary of State and Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, Professor Thomas Zeltner, the Graduate Institute's Dr. Ilona Kickbusch, the Director of the Global Health Programme and Dr. Nick Drager, Dr Gaudenz Silberschmidt from the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health and representatives from the FIOCRUZ Centre for Global Health, Brazil. Professors Liu Peilong and Guo Yan represented the Institute for Global Health, Beijing University.

Global Health Diplomacy is emerging as a new academic discipline. As globalisation of all aspects of economic and social life continues, health is increasingly recognised as an issue with worldwide ramifications on a par with peace and security. In the face of this, there is an urgent need for global health practitioners and decision-makers to build capacity and develop the tools and policies to respond to global health challenges. The Graduate Institute established its Global Health Programme in Spring 2008. It is one of the first of its kind and reflects a wider trend in both the practice and the analysis of global health which pays increasing attention to the links between health, foreign policy, trade and development. The Programme focuses on building capacity through research, networking with major global health actors – particularly those present in Geneva – and disseminating global health information. The Programme organises annual Global Health Diplomacy courses in Geneva and continues to extend its training activities across the world. It will shortly organise a global health diplomacy training course in Nairobi in cooperation with the Kenyan Ministry of Health and the University of Nairobi.

For more information on the Global Health Programme's training activities see www.graduateinstitute.ch/globalhealth