

## Delhi Digital Diplomacy Day

**Lunch panel: How does the Internet impact modern diplomacy**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2016 | Venue: ORF**

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Ambassador Vikas Swarup,  
Dr. Jovan Kurbalija,  
Ambassador Kishan Rana,  
Excellencies, dear colleagues from other Embassies,  
Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

I would like to warmly welcome you to the Delhi Digital Diplomacy Day, and to the panel discussion on the impact of the Internet or digital platforms on diplomacy.

The Embassy of Switzerland is honoured to co-host this event with the Observer Research foundation, DiploFoundation and the Geneva Internet Platform. It is our hope that this event will further strengthen the links between digital India and digital Switzerland and, in particular, between New Delhi and Geneva.

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, like most foreign ministries, is making wide use of ICTs and social media platforms to supplement existing communications channels. Social media is an effective way to reach out and engage with the citizens of the host country and also with the Swiss abroad. These platforms have already become critical to reach and to be reached in times of crisis.

Digital is more and more shaping diplomacy in many respects. Public opinion-making processes are shifting increasingly away from traditional media towards interactive platforms. Digital is becoming a matter of daily reality whether we use social media ourselves or negotiate cyber agreements. The challenge is to maximise opportunities and gains, while reducing risks.

Switzerland is actively contributing towards efforts to make the Internet open, free and secure.

My country has had a pioneering role in shaping global digital policy since a first major event, the World Summit on Information Society in 2003 in Geneva. More recently, the first cyber confidence building measures were adopted by the OSCE during the Swiss presidency. Today, we contribute actively as a member of the UN Group of Government Experts and by chairing the ICANN Government Advisory Council.

We are also proud to host many digital debates in Geneva. If there were a digital diplomacy capital in the world, one of the candidates would be Geneva. More than 50% of global digital policy happens there, from technological infrastructure, to human rights to e-commerce, to list a few.

The Swiss government established the Geneva Internet Platform in 2014. It aims at helping all digital actors to participate in Geneva-based digital diplomacy. The Platform fulfils the mission of an observatory, a capacity building centre, a facilitator for discussions and contacts, and a catalyst for change. I take the opportunity of this Delhi Digital Diplomacy Day to encourage Indian stakeholders to present their digital activities via the Geneva Internet Platform to diplomatic and policy communities. I am sure that Jovan Kurbalija, Head of the Geneva Internet Platform, will provide more information about these opportunities.

I very much look forward to the deliberations in the forthcoming panel discussion and hope to get answers to questions that have puzzled me, on this seemingly-not-so-complex, yet complex issue of digital diplomacy. One thing is certain, that adding the prefix 'digital' to diplomacy suddenly makes our jobs sound cool! Though, as an old timer, I must confess that I always found my job cool.

I am yet to conclude if diplomacy is driven by the discourse on social media or if the former sets the agenda. It probably works both ways. Are we living in an age of fast food and also fast diplomacy? Hopefully not! Has the digital space really altered the way traditional diplomacy is conducted? I hope for answers to this and to much more in the hour that follows!

Thank you once again for your presence and for your attention.

Let me now give the floor to Ambassador Kishan Rana, who will take us through this afternoon.