Increasingly high tides in the Marshall Islands illustrate the threat of rising sea levels.
The political turbulence of 2016 made many feel anxious about the state of world affairs. But what can be done?

Whatever its critics, we need the international system to work. We need international cooperation to curb global warming, to promote peaceful relations and end wars - most notably, the horrific conflict in Syria.

To be effective, international decision-making - diplomacy itself - must include those most affected by it. When they are excluded, which is usually the case, the resulting policies do not work and do not endure.

That is why Independent Diplomat’s work is essential.

Using the skills and tools of diplomacy, we make sure that those most affected - the countries most vulnerable to global warming or the groups demanding democracy in Syria - gain access to and a voice in international diplomatic decision-making. This leads to better negotiations and more effective solutions to world problems.

These actors, typically ignored or dismissed in big power bargaining, are in fact highly successful in promoting effective diplomatic outcomes. This is unsurprising given that they know the problems best; they have the most at stake, and they have the authority to drive solutions.

Independent Diplomat’s cause remains unchanged: diplomacy for justice. And in today’s unstable and disordered world system, ID’s work has never been more important. By making it fairer - bringing justice into diplomacy - we make the system work better.

Carne Ross
Founder and Executive Director
Independent Diplomat
ABOUT ID

At Independent Diplomat (ID), we work to bring those with the most at stake in a conflict or international problem into the decision-making process on that issue. This is not only fair, but also produces more sustainable agreements that contribute to global stability by taking everyone’s interests into account.

Our clients, all of whom meet strict ethical criteria, often face war, displacement, human rights violations, and other injustices. We advise them on political strategy, public diplomacy, and international law to make their voices heard in international negotiations over issues that affect them.

The measure of our success is not whether we can end wars or solve climate change, but how effectively our clients convey their own policy needs, in their own way.

A nonprofit advisory group of diplomats, lawyers, and strategists, Independent Diplomat (ID) helps democratic governments and political groups use diplomacy to achieve justice.
“Almost universally in places like the UN Security Council, the people being discussed are not present. Not only is this wrong and unfair, but it also results in bad decisions. **ID exists to fix that.**”

Carne Ross  
Founder and Executive Director of Independent Diplomat
ID AT A GLANCE: MAJOR EVENTS RELATED TO ID’S WORK IN 2016

**REFUGEES**
ID facilitates the participation of the only refugee delegation at the first-ever UN Summit intended to address the large movements of refugees and migrants.

**SRI LANKA**
The Sri Lankan government passes legislation to investigate cases of people who disappeared during the civil war, a potential step toward truth and justice. Tamils supported by ID continue to advocate for the legislation to go into effect.

**SOMALILAND**
ID’s advisor embeds in Somaliland’s foreign ministry provides day-to-day counsel and helps draw international attention to the 25th anniversary of Somali land’s independence.

**MARSHALL ISLANDS**
The Paris Agreement enters into force in November with the accession of 55 countries who account for at least 55% of global emissions.

**WESTERN SAHARA**
ID opens an office in Geneva.

**SYRIA**
ID supports the Syrian opposition at the UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva. In February, parties agree to a “cessation of hostilities,” but the lack of an effective enforcement mechanism led to its collapse.

**MEET THE PARTIES**
"Meet the Parties," a forum that provides a unique opportunity for members of the UN Security Council to meet with representatives of the people who will be affected by their decisions.

**SWITZERLAND**
After UNSG Ban Ki-moon visits Western Sahara, Morocco ejects 84 UN peacekeepers from the occupied territory.
CURRENT PROJECTS

Inclusive Diplomacy at the UN Security Council
Meet The Parties

Justice For War Crimes in Sri Lanka
US Tamil Political Action Council

Peace and Democracy for Syria
Syrian Opposition

A Voice In Diplomatic Discussions For Civil Society
Syrian Civil Society Coalition

Driving International Refugee Policy
Network for Refugee Voices

Self-Determination for the Last Colony in Africa
The Frente Polisario

Recognition for a Stable Democracy
Government of Somaliland

Higher Ambition in Climate Diplomacy
Government of the Marshall Islands

Look for this symbol throughout this report to open digital content.
INCLUSIVE DIPLOMACY
AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

MEET THE PARTIES

ID launched “Meet the Parties” (MTP) in November 2016 to bring together willing members of the UN Security Council and the representatives of non-State parties (NSPs) to the conflicts on the Council’s agenda to engage in a private and confidential dialogue. The State-based architecture of the UN does not reflect the reality that, in today’s troubled world, most violent conflicts occur within — rather than between — States.

Independent Diplomat is proud to provide this unique forum and innovative diplomatic practice to ensure that the voices of NSPs are heard by those deciding their fate.

By providing members of the Security Council with first-hand information and proposals from the NSPs involved in the conflicts on their agenda - including political opposition groups from intra-state conflicts in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East - MTP is making the Security Council’s diplomatic practice more inclusive and better informed.

By doing so, MTP seeks to make the Security Council more effective in achieving just and sustainable outcomes.

“Don’t give the Government both of your ears. Give one ear to the Government but save one ear for us.”

An appeal by the representative of an NSP to the participating members of the UN Security Council
We feared the world would disregard our calls for justice after Sri Lanka’s civil war. ID helped us raise our voice at the UN Human Rights Council and propel action to address the war’s atrocities... ID has had an impact on us beyond merely helping craft political strategies or reports. ID helps us believe that justice will prevail.

- Dr. Karunyan Arulanantham, President, USTPAC
As the state-sponsored war drags on in Syria, ID seeks to ensure that the Syrian democratic opposition are in a position to effectively champion their needs to the international community and shape the course of Syria’s political transition.

ID works behind the scenes with foreign policymakers toward meeting the Syrian opposition’s demands for civilian protection, increased access to humanitarian aid, and justice for victims of war crimes. This includes facilitating and supporting international visits with leaders and policymakers around the world and organizing public events to amplify the opposition’s voice in key diplomatic capitals.

ID has also supported the opposition through all rounds of the UN-sponsored peace talks in Geneva.

“I am deeply grateful to ID for providing us with high-quality strategic and tactical advice and the critical tools required to make our demands known to key decision makers. From organizing meetings and events with Foreign Ministers, senior officials and key opinion formers, to preparing strategic advice to advance our aims, to devising and executing effective public diplomacy strategies, ID contributes vital support to our diplomatic activity.”

- Hind Kabawat, Syrian HNC Opposition Member
A VOICE IN DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION

ID supports a coalition of more than 200 Syrian-led civil society groups based inside and outside of Syria that champion the advancement of human rights, democracy, and accountability.

These groups confront a wide range of issues, including humanitarian aid delivery, rescue work, human rights monitoring, local governance, women’s empowerment, detainee release, accountability, and more. Together they call for greater international action to protect, empower, and liberate Syrian civilians.

ID empowers these leaders to more effectively make their voices heard in diplomatic circles. As a result, they gain crucial opportunities to propose their own solutions to the Syrian crisis to key members of the international community.

“Independent Diplomat enables us to extend our voices and legitimate demands to international decision-makers. The discussions we have had with ID have been always transparent, deep, and constructive. Their advice is invaluable.”

- Mutasem Syoufi, Executive Director of The Day After
In 2016, the number of refugees worldwide reached a record high of over 21 million. Half of them are children. As these victims of war and persecution try to make their way to safety, they often face illegal detention and other manifestations of xenophobia.

**ID advises the Network for Refugee Voices, a group of refugees who seek ambitious international refugee policy that reflects their needs.**

With ID’s guidance and support, the network sent a refugee delegation to the UN refugee summit, where they engaged the Secretary-General and summit leaders in a conversation that was televised to the General Assembly. They were the only refugee delegation to participate in the summit. They also held bilateral meetings with several key Member States and participated in side events to build public support for their positions.

The international community has the capacity to solve the refugee crisis while living up to its moral and legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but refugees themselves must be part of the process if they are to succeed.

“Independent Diplomat supports our efforts to navigate complex political and diplomatic environments. With such support the impact of our work to advance refugee rights reaches its full potential. ID’s practical expertise and international reputation guarantees a space for our views in the highest levels possible.”

- Salim Salamah; Director, Palestinian League for Human Rights - Syria, and Member of the Network for Refugee Voices
THE FRENTE POLISARIO

For the past decade, ID has supported the movement for a referendum on self-determination for Western Sahara. Many of the indigenous Saharawi people still live in refugee camps in Algeria as a result of Morocco’s illegal occupation of the Territory since 1975.

ID advises the Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and its political leadership, the Frente POLISARIO.

In 2016, the Frente POLISARIO scored a major victory when the European Court of Justice ruled that Western Sahara cannot be treated as a part of Morocco and that no EU-Morocco trade deals can apply to the territory. By highlighting the Moroccan government’s many violations of international law, the POLISARIO reinforced its core goal to advance the Saharawi people’s territorial and sovereign rights as the indigenous people of a UN-declared occupied Territory.

“Over the course of a decade, ID has shared our struggle and supported our efforts to bring about a free Western Sahara. Their diplomatic expertise has been invaluable as we take the fight for our freedom to the corridors of international power. In Independent Diplomat, we know we have a true ally who will stand with the Saharawi people in our quest for justice and self-determination.”

- Emhamed Khadad, MINURSO Coordinator, Frente POLISARIO Advisor to the President of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)
RECOGNITION FOR A STABLE DEMOCRACY

GOVERNMENT OF SOMALILAND

Despite not being recognized as an independent state since reasserting its independence in 1991, the Republic of Somaliland has emerged as a beacon of peace, stability and freedom in a region mired in political turmoil and security threats.

Since 2006, ID has worked with its democratically-elected government to diplomatically engage the international community and cooperate with neighboring countries, including on efforts to combat piracy. The goal is to raise Somaliland’s profile and secure more development assistance. The drought that began three years ago leaves more than half a million people in desperate need of international humanitarian aid.

In 2016, ID worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch a social media campaign around the 25th anniversary of Somaliland’s independence. Used to highlight celebrations taking place within the country and throughout the Somaliland diaspora, the hashtag #SomalilandIs25 topped Twitter trends in the region and made an estimated 2.5 million impressions.

“ID has helped us to define our diplomatic goals, leverage our de facto sovereignty and get more from our relationships with other countries. This has helped immeasurably.”

- Dr. Saad Ali Shire, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Republic of Somaliland
ID is proud to have helped guide the Republic of the Marshall Islands to become a leading international voice for the climate-vulnerable. They earned widespread recognition for playing a central role in delivering a more ambitious global agreement in Paris by forming the High Ambition Coalition (HAC). Since then, the Marshall Islands, with support from ID, has developed the High Ambition Coalition into an ongoing and integral Ministerial forum for coordinating and driving progressive climate action.

The HAC played a decisive role in bringing the Paris Agreement into force in record time, and in April, the Marshall Islands became the first country to ratify it. The Marshall Islands and the HAC also helped secure historic climate-related outcomes in a deal to reduce international civil aviation emissions and in securing the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

Without these achievements it would be impossible to keep average global warming within 1.5°C; a requirement for the survival of the Marshall Islands and indeed the world.
“ID helped us to level the playing field by advising on diplomatic strategy, securing press coverage, and helping us get a seat at the table.”

– H.E. Tony de Brum, Former Foreign Minister and now Ambassador for Climate Change, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Independent Diplomat is committed to changing the nature of international diplomacy. We bring important policy debates out from behind the closed doors of traditional power centers and into the public discourse. Through our public outreach and events, we contextualize and humanize the critical diplomatic issues confronting our clients.

This Is Aleppo, Scandinavia House, New York, September 2016

Syrian doctors, educators, and rescue workers recounted the horrors of living under siege and being exposed to indiscriminate violence. They called for greater protection of civilians in order to continue their work helping fellow Syrians.

The panel discussion, planned in collaboration with New York University and Human Rights Watch, was one of several events ID organized to coincide with the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly.
Her Story, Club Suisse de la Presse, Geneva, April 2016

As part of the Geneva III process, the Women’s Consultative Committee of the Syrian opposition High Negotiations Committee is working to develop a mechanism to secure the release of all detainees, starting with women and children. In this special event, Syrian women of diverse backgrounds described their own experiences of torture and detention in Assad’s prisons, as well as the opposition’s efforts to ensure the safe release of Syrian detainees.

Fighting for Survival: The Paris Climate Agreement & How It Got Done, Civic Hall, New York, April 2016

At Fighting for Survival, leading negotiators recounted the critical behind-the-scenes moments and political compromises that helped to shape the final Paris Agreement. ID Executive Director Carne Ross delivered opening remarks.

Breakfast Briefing: Legal Challenges to the UN Security Council, Independent Diplomat, New York, April 2016

ID Legal Advisor Mona Khalil (center) and Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations Christian Wenaweser (right) briefed guests on the political, legal, and human consequences of legal challenges to the UN Security Council. ID Executive Director Carne Ross moderated the discussion.

This event was part of an ongoing quarterly series of breakfast briefings.
This year, eight ID staff members made a total of 38 press appearances across 35 different news outlets based in 11 different countries.

"With tragic consequences around the world, all three principal organs — the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General — have been failing to fulfill their respective mandates and in so doing have undermined the credibility and effectiveness of the UN. By failing to enforce international law, these three organs have violated it. By failing to uphold the UN Charter, they have betrayed its objects and purposes." - PassBlue

Additional media: Al Jazeera English, Dagens ETC, Foreign Policy, Opinio Juris

(On UN reform) "When the Council discusses Syria, Libya or Somalia, you can safely assume Syrians, Libyans or Somalis will not be present. It is indefensible that, despite the reality that almost all its agenda concerns conflict between "non-state" groups, the Security Council still only allows states to address it, and even that is not frequent practice when they are not members of the Council." - The Guardian

(On Morocco’s expulsion of UN mission staff and 84 peacekeepers) “It is a brazen attempt to shut down the UN’s role in Western Sahara. It is also a direct violation of... its obligations under the UN Charter to carry out the decisions of the [Security Council]. It really is setting up a dangerous precedent for peacekeeping operations.” - Global Dispatches Podcast

“Should we applaud the well-documented human rights abuses perpetrated against Sahrawis by Moroccan security forces?... Should we applaud when Freedom House rates Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara as “not free”? It is a sad reality that because Morocco cooperates with the West on counter-terrorism and other security issues, many countries look the other way when it comes to its illegal occupation of Western Sahara.” - The World Post (Huffington Post & Berggruen Institute)

(On Russian involvement in Syria) “Russia has created this humanitarian catastrophe not only in Aleppo but across Syria... The humanitarian corridors they suggested are, in the view of many Syrians, a cynical way (to) get rid of some people from Aleppo and justify the wholesale annihilation of anyone left.” - Toronto Star

Additional media: BBC, Newsweek
(Recalling the scene at 2 am on the final day of climate negotiations in Paris) “I got very nervous, because it felt to me like it was their last roll of the dice to try to deliver a very minimalist agreement… [So] we sent messages out to all the progressive countries and got ministers out offices, and in some cases out of bed… I said [speaking as part of the RMI delegation], “We’re not going to be able to accept something that removes all the ambitious elements. We can’t go along with last-minute eliminations of things we have been negotiating for many months, if not years…. By morning, all the big players had signed off on it.” - Rolling Stone
Somali independence celebrations: "It underlines the fact that Somaliland has for the past 25 been a sovereign state. It may not be recognized as a sovereign state but it has actually been effective at exercising jurisdiction over its territory. And this willingness on the part of outside countries to cut bilateral deals is just further evidence of that." - Radio France Internationale’s English service
Over half a million views across ID’s social media channels.

5K followers (1.3K new)
318K impressions
5K page likes
125K people reached
We joined Instagram,
Follow us!
4.3K followers
800 engagements
Visit our website to keep up to date

Click the media icons to view ID staff interviews and op-eds from 2016.
“ID goes where conventional diplomacy cannot or will not. Its advice helps marginalized peoples raise their voices in the halls of diplomatic power, to produce better and more just decisions.”

Gareth Evans, Former Australian Foreign Minister and ID Advisory Council Member

Syrian political analyst and member of the Network for Refugee Voices, Ibrahim al-Assil, attends the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants.
2016 CONSOLIDATED FINANCIALS*

**REVENUE**
- CLIENT INCOME 2%
- INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT 3%
- FOUNDATIONS 22%
- GOVERNMENT 73%

**EXPENSES**
- FUNDRAISING 7%
- MANAGEMENT & GENERAL 12%
- PROGRAMS 81%

*Figures represent global finances including ID US and ID UK.*
The past year has delivered tremendous change for the world and brought immense challenges for our clients - and for peace and security. But it has also emboldened us. It has forged alliances and produced networks and partnerships that Independent Diplomat is proud to champion. In the face of a brutal ongoing conflict in Syria, the rise of nationalism, and the escalating threat of global warming, ID has supported our brave and determined clients - those with the most at stake in these issues.

Independent Diplomat relies on the generosity and contributions from a global community of dedicated supporters. Each donor listed below has joined us in this global fight for justice and we are deeply grateful. Thank you for being part of our story.

DONORS

Carnegie Corporation of New York
ClimateWorks Foundation
Boston Foundation
European Climate Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Skoll Foundation
Stanley Foundation
Winston Foundation
David Rockefeller Fund
Climate & Development Knowledge Network

Permanent Mission of the Netherlands
Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway
Government of the United Kingdom

IN-KIND DONORS

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, LLP
Debevoise & Plimpton
Jennifer Lake and Donald Donovan
Mulan Ashwin and Joe Rinaldi

US BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Alice H. Henkin
Larry D. Johnson
Jan Krukowski (Chair)
Jennifer Lake (Secretary)
Victor Navasky
Aryeh Neier
Scott Ogur (Treasurer)
James R. Silkenat
Aimee Barnes

UK TRUSTEES*

Stefanie Grant
Edward Mortimer
Carne Ross
Nick Stadlen
Gardner Thompson
Francesc Vendrell

*ID is registered in the US as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and also in the UK as a charitable company.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hiruy Amanuel
Thomas R. Pickering
Gareth Evans
Sir Kieran Prendergast
Søren Jessen-Petersen
Danilo Türk
Edward Mortimer
Francesc Vendrell

DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Scott Ogur (Chair)
Mulan Ashwin
Mairi Bryan
Joan Fortune

PHOTO CREDITS:

Manuel Elias, Eskinder Debebe, Michael Dobson, Anthony Jean, Alson J Kelen, Emma Brown Photography
We invite you to be a part of our story. Together, we can amplify the voices of marginalized groups around the world.

For more information about ways to give please contact: Sherrie Ager
Director of Development and External Relations
+1 212 594 8295
sherrie.ager@independentdiplomat.org

Additional information about ID’s work with the governments of Somaliland, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, and the Syrian Coalition is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
“Independent Diplomat’s cause remains unchanged: diplomacy for justice. And in this unstable and disordered world system, ID’s work has never been more important.

“By making it fairer – bringing justice into diplomacy – we make the system work better.”

Carne Ross