For more than a decade now, Independent Diplomat has worked behind-the-scenes to help democratic countries and political groups navigate the closed corridors of diplomacy.

2015 was a big year for us. We worked with the 100 plus progressive nations that came together as the High Ambition Coalition to make the UN climate agreement, negotiated in Paris in December, much stronger than many had expected. It grew out of our six-year relationship with the Marshall Islands and their excellent Foreign Minister Tony de Brum, who spearheaded the coalition and proposed several of the agreement’s strongest elements. Minister de Brum said that the extraordinary success of the Paris Agreement gave him hope — we are very proud to have worked with him on it.

What happened in Paris is at the heart of what ID does. Our presence has discreetly influenced the ongoing Syrian peace talks, where we helped the democratic Syrian opposition demand that parties prioritize the protection of civilians; the UN Human Rights Council’s resolution holding both sides accountable for war crimes committed during Sri Lanka’s civil war; and the African Union’s strongest-ever demand that the people of Western Sahara finally get to exercise their right to self-determination as guaranteed by international law.

We are encouraged by our clients’ achievements in 2015, but there is more work to be done. We will continue to help our clients punch above their weight in international decision-making to ensure they have a say in determining their own futures.

CARNE ROSS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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ABOUT US

INDEPENDENT DIPLOMAT (ID) is a unique non-profit venture in the world of international relations, diplomacy and conflict prevention. We deliver advice and assistance to democratic governments and political groups across the three pillars of contemporary diplomacy: political and diplomatic strategy, international law and public diplomacy.

We work inside the diplomatic system to ensure that the voices of the people most affected by international decisions are heard in the negotiations about their futures.

Founded in 2004 by former British diplomat Carne Ross, ID works to enhance clients’ diplomatic influence.

This includes:

- Collecting and analyzing diplomatic intelligence
- Devising effective media and communications strategies
- Promoting human rights and the rule of international law
2015 CLIENT HIGHLIGHTS

January: Tamil and minority communities in Sri Lanka play a crucial role in the presidential election of Maithripala Sirisena over the increasingly authoritarian Rajapaksa regime. It leads to cautious optimism about accountability and justice for crimes committed during the Sri Lankan civil war.

March: 15 UN Member States sponsor a graphic photography exhibition at the UN to draw attention to the Syrian regime’s human rights abuses. Titled after the pseudonym of a Syrian army defector who smuggled out thousands of photos documenting deaths of detainees, Caesar Photos: Inside Syrian Authorities’ Prisons depicts torture.

June: During the African Union Summit, the AU calls on the UN General Assembly to set a date for a self-determination referendum on Western Sahara.

July: The Republic of the Marshall Islands sets robust interim emissions targets as part of a plan to become carbon neutral by mid-century. It becomes the first developing country to adopt an absolute economy-wide emissions target.

September: The Human Rights Council adopts a consensus resolution on Sri Lankan accountability for human rights violations during the civil war.

September: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls for negotiations without preconditions between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO.

December: The Marshall Islands-led High Ambition Coalition representing over 100 countries committed to tougher climate change targets breaks cover in Paris. This game-changing moment at the UN climate negotiations is described by The New Yorker as “an unprecedented diplomatic feat.”

December: The Syrian National Coalition works to strengthen Syrian civil society so that it can more effectively and productively influence the Geneva III peace talks. ID facilitates the building of a coalition of more than 120 humanitarian groups, women activists and other civil society organizations.
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

We help clients craft and publicly disseminate compelling narratives centered on historical or current events to bolster their policy positions. Our media advisors develop creative campaigns, capitalizing on both traditional and social media to attract the attention of the relevant influential news outlets, UN delegations and other key actors within the community.

INTERNATIONAL LAW

Legal advice is a key element of any diplomatic strategy aiming to help our clients achieve their goals within the framework of international law. ID only works with clients who are fully committed to the rule of law and upholding the principles of democracy and human rights.

POLITICAL STRATEGY

Our team of former diplomats lend their international relations expertise to clients, advising them on how best to achieve their political goals through diplomatic channels. We help marginalized states and groups navigate the complex workings of the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies to ensure their interests and concerns are reflected in international agreements.

HOW WE WORK
THE THREE PILLARS OF MODERN DIPLOMACY
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS / CLIMATE CHANGE
SMALL ISLANDS, BIG IMPACT.

THE YOUNGEST PARIS DELEGATE:
SELINA LEEM, THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

“I am a small island girl with big dreams.

“The Paris Agreement is for those of us whose identity, whose culture, whose ancestors, whose whole being, is bound to their land. The same story will play out everywhere in the world. If this is a story about our islands, it is a story for the whole world. Sometimes when you want to make a change then it is necessary to turn the world upside down, because it is not for the better, but it is simply for the best. This Agreement should be the turning point in our story, a turning point for all of us.”

THE UN CLIMATE AGREEMENT:
FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

Lying just above sea level, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is existentially threatened by climate change. With ID’s help, RMI has become the leading international voice for the climate-vulnerable, playing a central role in delivering a more ambitious global agreement in Paris at the end of 2015. By forming a “High Ambition Coalition” during those negotiations, the Marshall Islands was able to work with over 100 other states to push through more robust provisions. These included a goal to limit warming to 1.5° Celsius and a ‘ratchet’ mechanism requiring countries to improve their emissions reduction targets every five years. These elements are widely recognized as a massive step-change in international efforts to tackle climate change.

ID has 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, Republic of the Marshall Islands

PHOTO CREDIT: GIFF JOHNSON
PURSUING THE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Western Sahara is the last colony in Africa, illegally occupied by the Kingdom of Morocco for more than 40 years. Since 2006, ID has worked with the Government of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic and its political leadership, the Frente POLISARIO, to secure a peaceful process of self-determination. This includes efforts to encourage greater African Union engagement on this issue, prevent the illegal exploitation of Western Sahara’s rich natural resources, and curb Morocco’s well-documented human rights violations of the Saharawi people.

“ID’s creative approach to diplomacy and knowledge of the UN system have helped us take a more comprehensive message to more people within the diplomatic system.”

– EMHAMED KHADAD
MINURSO Coordinator, Frente POLISARIO
The United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) is a US-based Tamil advocacy organization that ID has advised since 2011. It seeks accountability from the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for atrocities committed during and after the civil war, an end to ongoing human rights abuses and a political settlement to resolve the country’s decades-long ethnic conflict.

ID primarily advises USTPAC on engagement with the UN Human Rights Council, which in 2015 passed a landmark consensus resolution that serves as a blueprint for transitional justice in Sri Lanka. That resolution reflects many of USTPAC’s objectives and forms the foundation of their advocacy moving forward.
DIPLOMATIC ADVICE FOR A FUNCTIONAL STATE IN A FRAGILE REGION

Since declaring independence in 1991, Somaliland has built a stable and peaceful democracy in a volatile region despite not being recognized as an independent state. ID works with Somaliland’s democratically-elected government to improve its diplomatic performance, raise its international profile and secure more development assistance. In 2015, ID advised Somaliland on strategy towards the suspended Somaliland-Somalia Dialogue, which is intended to help clarify future relations between the two countries. ID also supported Somaliland’s renewed engagement with the African Union and the UN to help Somaliland gain international credibility.

“ID understands the challenges confronting an unrecognized state such as Somaliland and works creatively with us to achieve our diplomatic goals.”

— DR. SAAD ALI SHIRE
Foreign Minister, Republic of Somaliland
PAVING THE WAY FOR A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC SYRIA

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces formed in 2012 to unite Syrians committed to a peaceful, pluralistic, and democratic future for their country. ID has worked with the Syrian Coalition since March 2013 to help them achieve their goals: political transition to democracy; protection of civilians; increased humanitarian access; defeat of extremism; and justice for war crimes. Late in 2015, the Syrian Coalition and all remaining opposition and moderate armed groups came together to form the High Negotiations Committee (HNC). They represent opposition interests at the ongoing UN peace talks in Geneva, with support from ID.

“ID has helped us to strengthen our voice at the United Nations.”

– DR. NAJIB GHADBIAN
Us Representative, Syrian National Coalition
In 2015, ID and its clients garnered considerable attention by major international media outlets, especially around the success of the Paris Climate Talks in December. With ID’s help, the Marshall Islands pushed hard for, and achieved, a more ambitious climate change treaty prompting *Rolling Stone* to contend “the greatest surprise in Paris was one of the most important players in the negotiations came from one of the world’s smallest nations.”

The ongoing war in Syria also dominated the news this year, as intensified bombing campaigns wrought havoc on the civilian population. ID’s Policy Director Reza Afshar shared his views on the crisis with *The New York Times*, *BBC Newsnight* and *Buzzfeed*, among others. Likewise, Executive Director Carne Ross discussed what needs to happen at the U.N. Security Council to slow the violence on *NPR’s “The Takeaway”* and penned a *New York Times* op-ed in support of Syrian Kurds’ efforts at self-government.

Meanwhile, the Frente POLISARIO has been building momentum toward achieving the long-awaited self-determination referendum for the Saharawi people of Western Sahara. Their leadership penned op-eds for *The Huffington Post* and *The Hill* as well as a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* to drum up support.

**SELECT COVERAGE**

*The New York Times: Nations Approve Landmark Climate Accord in Paris*

*Reuters: At Climate Talks, the media message is a job for PR professionals*

*Climate Home: Foie gras, oysters and a climate deal: How the Paris pact was won*
ID uses social media to build awareness of diplomatic issues. In 2015, we grew our base of followers across various platforms and deepened audience engagement.

**FACEBOOK**
62.4K people reached
4.7K page likes (up 21% from 2014)

**TWITTER**
222K total impressions
3.2K followers (up 44% from 2014)

**LINKEDIN**
3.7K followers
Top post earned 4.9K impressions
2015 CONSOLIDATED FINANCIALS*

FUNDRAISING, 6%

MANAGEMENT & GENERAL, 13%

PROGRAMS, 81%

EXPENSES

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT & OTHER INCOME, 1%

CLIENT INCOME, 14%

FOUNDATIONS, 32%

GOVERNMENTS, 53%

REVENUE

2015 REVENUE $4.9M

* Figures reflect global financials, including ID US and ID UK
MANY THANKS

ID’s accomplishments in 2015 would not have been possible without the support of our foundation, government and individual donors, as well as generous in-kind support from our friends.

Our supporters share a common goal of seeing a world where every marginalized voice is heard in international discussions; where conflicts are resolved; and outcomes are just and sustainable.

We are indebted to all those who have given their time, assistance and advice throughout 2015. To our donors, we thank you for your generosity and commitment to Justice in Diplomacy.

We would also like to acknowledge our major funders for their support and commitment to ID:

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THE GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

CONTRIBUTE TO OUR VISION OF A MORE PEACEFUL AND STABLE WORLD

We invite you to be a part of our work. By following our clients in the news, sharing their stories and donating to us, you can help us amplify the voices of marginalized groups around the world. Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated.

DONATE ONLINE

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

To learn more, please contact:

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Independent Diplomat is also a UK charitable company whose trustees include Stefanie Grant, Edward Mortimer, Carne Ross, Nick Stadlen, Gardner Thompson and Francesc Vendrell.

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.