We are making progress.

When the UN Secretary-General talks about the necessity of including those most affected in diplomatic processes, we can see that Independent Diplomat's message is getting through.

And we practice what we (and now the UN) preach. Across the road from the UN's grandiose buildings in a private hotel conference room, Independent Diplomat holds unprecedented meetings to bring together Security Council diplomats with the warring parties, political groups and sometimes victims of the conflicts that fill the Security Council's agenda. Almost all members of the Security Council attend. The UN itself should organize such meetings but because it doesn't, ID must.

And in multiple conflicts and diplomatic processes, from climate change to refugees or the terrible war in Syria, ID is practicing what it preaches: making sure that those most affected, and the democratic representatives of people on the ground, are brought into the diplomatic discussion about them. And in every case, our work improves those processes by making them reflect the needs of the people who matter most.

This work is especially necessary when the international system is under strain. We have to make it effective. And making it effective means bringing those most affected to the table.

This is what we do.

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.
“With equal access to diplomatic tools, affected individuals are their own best advocates. The strength of the human spirit is palpable each and every day that we work with our partners to achieve their goals.”

- Joanna MacGregor, Policy Officer, Independent Diplomat
"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, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INDEPENDENT DIPLOMAT
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.
Independent Diplomat (ID) provided Rohingya and Burmese organizations urgent diplomatic support to respond to the Rohingya crisis in 2017. Following mass atrocities by the Burmese military in August 2017, nearly 700,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh, creating a massive humanitarian emergency. ID’s response focused on securing UN Security Council pressure, influencing the European Union, ensuring adequate humanitarian support, pressing for a path to citizenship, and working towards accountability.

ID rapidly launched into work with activists following the massacres. In Brussels, ID engaged with European states to press for more ambitious Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Myanmar. ID subsequently organized a discussion with Rohingya representatives and European Parliamentarians about the need for political pressure and accountability measures. In New York, ID pressed the Security Council to pass a resolution reflecting the magnitude and gravity of the violence.

This action helped secure a Presidential Statement that included calls to end the violence, create a credible repatriation process, and address the root causes of the crisis.

Finally, ID brought activists to Geneva to brief diplomats ahead of a Human Rights Council Special Session on Myanmar. These initial steps laid the groundwork for an official ID Rohingya project in 2018.
2017 was a dire year in the Syrian conflict, in which the Assad regime tightened its grip over large swaths of Syrian territory, and the international community grew increasingly apathetic and divided over a solution. Despite these obstacles, ID’s strategic and tactical advice to the Syrian opposition, Syria civil society and female Syrian leaders ensured that Syrians remained at the forefront of discussions about the crisis, generating effective policy proposals and constructively engaging in the UN-led political process.

Throughout the past year, ID forged a solid advisory relationship with the newly formed Syrian Negotiation Commission, providing on-the-ground support throughout each round of UN-led peace negotiations in Geneva, as well as the opposition’s diplomacy in the US and Europe. In parallel, ID worked with Syrian women to bridge the gap between women in civil society and those in politics, supporting the emergence of Syria’s first feminist political movement, the Syrian Women’s Political Movement. ID also continued to build on its relationship to Syrian civil society, ensuring their proactive engagement in the political process.

ID support encouraged Syrians to assertively articulate their diplomatic goals, amplify their needs and demands of the process, and create a more inclusive political process. As a result of this support, Syrians are in a better position to advance their objectives, and make progress on their political and humanitarian goals. Nevertheless, the challenges are monumental - without a more receptive and proactive international community, prospects for a peaceful solution in the near future remain low.
Western Sahara is the last colony in Africa. Occupied by Morocco since 1975, the territory is physically divided by a massive earth and sand “berm” stretching thousands of kilometers, manned by tens of thousands of Moroccan troops and covered in hundreds of thousands of landmines. The berm divides the Saharawi population living under a brutal Moroccan occupation from their relatives living in the inhospitable refugee camps of Tindouf, Algeria.

Western Sahara is Independent Diplomat’s longest running project. This ignominious distinction reflects the longstanding failure of the international community to address the issue diplomatically. However, 2017 saw the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler. ID worked with the Frente POLISARIO – Western Sahara’s political representatives – to move towards and prepare for the relaunch of the UN political process on Western Sahara, namely through face-to-face, time bound negotiations aimed at delivering a long promised referendum on self-determination.

In 2017, ID also started working more systematically with civil society groups from Western Sahara’s occupied Territory, refugee camps, and diaspora in order to help Saharawi civil society improve their public diplomacy efforts and have their voices heard on issues ranging from EU trade in Western Sahara to the UN political process.
In 2017 the international refugee system continued to be tested with the highest number of people in refuge since World War II, in evermore protracted situations. In this environment refugees are facing increasing inhumane treatment marked by detention and xenophobia, while the refugee response system is being challenged by increased needs, a lack of solutions and the absence of effective international solidarity.

In response to this bleak reality of failed policies, in 2017 the UN launched a process to define a new Global Compact on Refugees. A global commitment to increased refugee responsibility sharing and improved livelihoods of refugees across the world.

The state-led negotiations of the Compact took place at the United Nations in Geneva, behind closed doors. However, with ID’s advice, the Network for Refugee Voices secured refugee participation at the Compact throughout the negotiation process. A diverse delegation of refugee leaders made monthly trips to Geneva to advocate for refugee self-representation and a human-rights based approach to refugee policymaking. Thanks to refugee leadership, the Compact states that “states and stakeholders will facilitate meaningful participation of refugees,” and its adoption in December 2018 will set a precedent that no refugee policy is legitimate without refugee input.
CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

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.

In 2017, the Marshall Islands again lead by example, becoming the first country in the world to ratify the historic Kigali Amendment to phase down toxic hydrofluorocarbons and commencing work on a long-term strategy to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The HAC also helped launched a new groundbreaking global alliance to phase-out coal and played a key role in keeping international political momentum on track in the wake of President Trump’s announcement of his intention to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement. Responding to an idea that began as a proposal of the Marshall Islands, the UN Secretary-General also announced a new Climate Summit in 2019 to urgently inspire more urgent action to reduce emissions.

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 to avoid the worst impacts around the world.
Beginning in 2011, ID advised USTPAC on diplomatic means to attain justice for atrocities committed during and after the Sri Lankan civil war, end ongoing human rights violations, and achieve a political settlement to address the root causes of Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict.

With ID, USTPAC helped secure a UN investigation and five Human Rights Council resolutions on Sri Lanka. This includes resolution 30/1, which calls for a transitional justice program and political reforms in the country. In 2017, the leaders of USTPAC and three other major diaspora groups met with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, demonstrating the respected and influential position Tamil advocates have gained at the HRC.

ID concluded its project with USTPAC in May 2017.

USTPAC’s members continue to use diplomatic achievements earned at the HRC to drive domestic reforms and pursue justice in Sri Lanka.
“Independent Diplomat has been instrumental in creating the right and safe space for Syrian women to reach their potential. They have been flexible, prompt and professional in their support. And in that spirit they were the main backers in setting up and launching the Syrian Women’s Political Movement.”

- Mariam Jalabi, Representative of the Syrian Opposition Coalition to the UN and Co-founder of Syrian Women’s Political Movement
ID regularly briefs the international news media on the latest developments in our clients’ portfolios. Below are a selection of media appearances from 2017. Click quotes for article.

“THE MAJOR DRIVER OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND INDEED EXTREMISM IN SYRIA IS THE INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS. WE NEED A POLICY THAT STOPS THOSE BOMBS.”

- REZA AFSHAR, POLICY DIRECTOR, ON BBC NEWSNIGHT ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND SYRIA
“WESTERN SAHARA IS OFTEN DISMISSED AS A FROZEN CONFLICT, BUT INTERNATIONAL LAW, COUNTLESS UN RESOLUTIONS, AND A CLEAR MORAL IMPERATIVE ARE ON THE SIDE OF THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN SAHARA.”

- NICK SCOTT, PROGRAM OFFICER, IN OPEN DEMOCRACY ON THE LAST COLONY IN AFRICA

“BREAKING THE BIG POWERS’ HOLD ON THE SENIOR JOBS IS THE ONLY WAY HE CAN TRULY ENSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE U.N.’S POLICIES OR ADVICE.”

- CARNE ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IN FOREIGN POLICY ON UN SG ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
"THE TRUE BEGINNING OF THE ARAB SPRING TOOK PLACE IN THE CAMPS OF GDEIM IZIK. AND IT IS THERE, IN WESTERN SAHARA, THAT THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD MUST PUT AN END TO MOROCCO’S UNLAWFUL OCCUPATION, GRANTING FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE TO AFRICA’S LAST COLONY."
- CARNE ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IN THE NEW REPUBLIC ON WESTERN SAHARA

"IF THE LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL BRANCHES OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ALLOW SUCH A STEP TO OCCUR, THEREFORE, IT WILL IRREPARABLY DAMAGE THE CREDIBILITY OF THE U.S. ON THE WORLD STAGE."
- FORMER CLIMATE ADVISOR, MICHAEL DOBSON IN THE HUFFINGTON POST ON THE US WITHDRAWING FROM THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT
“Independent Diplomat was instrumental in the establishment and creation of the Network of Refugee Voices. They support us to spearhead and shape a global movement of refugees that is designed by refugees, for refugees.”

- Sana Mustafa, Founding Member of the Network for Refugee Voices
In fiscal year 2017, 82% of our expenditure went to program services.

**2017 CONSOLIDATED FINANCIALS**

*Figures represent global finances including ID US and ID UK.*
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: Nick Scott, Senior External Relations and Program Officer nick.scott@independentdiplomat.org
Looking back at the past year, we have witnessed a number of overwhelming challenges facing our partners. As politicians took power in various countries with policies of indifference or outright hostility to human rights, there was a growing cloud of concern. But it has also been a year of bravery, of solidarity and resilience that our partners have shown. Our partners became a part of a global movement in defense of values, the values that Independent Diplomat also shares.

Independent Diplomat is an international non-profit that relies on the generosity of our supporters and donors. Generous investments in our work make it possible to help our partners amply their voices, transform diplomacy and resolve conflict. Thank you to our donors for sharing in our vision of a better world. We could not do it without you.
“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.”

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