

Closing Plenary



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Chairman,
GESDA Board of Directors,
Austria

Closing Address

Ladies and gentlemen

We are arriving at the end of three very intensive days of discussions, of explanations and of propositions. I think we can say the agenda is exhausted, and perhaps some of us are exhausted too. Let me thank you.

Thank you to the over 900 active participants, and specifically also the students – not only those who were with us on stage, but also the others who have been with us during the three days and have been participating actively. And we had participation really from all over the world, which had also an impact worldwide on the social media. We had invaluable inputs. We had creative and motivating comments and messages. And they were full of knowledge and of wisdom. And all that with – highly appreciated from me – the intention to help GESDA to find its way into the future.

We listened to 108 speakers from 33 countries under the guidance of fantastic moderators – and I know that the quality of the panel depends on the moderators. And there the quality was extremely high. And we profited from the wealth of their knowledge, foresight and anticipation.

The basis for all of our discussions was the first GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar®, which itself is a result of the intensive work of our Academic Forum, under the leadership of Joël Mesot and Martin Vetterli. I don't know whether you have had the time to read it, but I'm sure you will. For me, the important thing is that it has been signed by 543 scientists. As a matter of credibility, this is extremely important, because it certifies that what we are putting in there has been checked and is the reflection of the reality, of what is happening. And not only do we have here the analysis of what is cooking in the laboratories, we also have in this Radar the scientific opinion of what those breakthroughs will bring to our daily life in the next five, ten or 25 years.

This document – I am sure – will be of interest not only to the scientific community, to universities. I also believe that policy makers should have a deep look into it, as well as private corporations. If I were in charge of the research institute at a private company, believe me, I would look into this document because it shows me where the real breakthroughs will come through.

The first qualitative comments which accompanied the Radar are the results of these confrontations that we had during the last year between the Academic and the Diplomacy Forum (the latter one presided so efficiently by Michael Møller), in what we have called the "Situation Room". This Situation Room offers a constructive environment for those encounters of communities which have a quite different language

– as we have heard just in the last presentation – but also a different agenda and different interests.

All this, ladies and gentlemen, would not have happened without our outstandingly small but highly professional team, under the leadership of our Secretary General Stéphane Decoutère, and under the guidance of our deeply engaged Board of Directors, all of whom have participated in the different panels during these three days. So to all of you, my very warm thanks for your engagement in favour of GESDA.

The objective of this first Summit was, for the first time, to offer to the public a presentation of what GESDA is, but also – I hope – of what GESDA is not. Which is for me as important. And to that purpose, we presented you our first Science Breakthrough Radar®, and we created a Situation Room. I have been asked many times: "What is this Situation Room?" Well, a situation room is a process which allows this confrontation between science and diplomacy and politics. And the Summit itself was a situation room. You were sitting in a situation room, you were participating in it. That's what we are doing all year long, confronting, discussing and understanding better those different problems. And we also explained the basics of our policy of partnerships. I see different partnerships, which are available for those who are interested to work with us – and we wanted to hear from you whether GESDA could be relevant for all stakeholders interested in scientific diplomacy and multilateralism.

From what I have heard from all of you, I would be arrogant to deduce that we have received a clear "yes" from you. Yes, GESDA can be and should be relevant for all stakeholders. But then I also know very well that the relevancy will only last as long as you have trust in our work. Trust in GESDA as an honest broker which works in a fact-based, transparent and inclusive way. Those are the fundamental conditions, at which GESDA can perform its duty as a builder of bridges between the scientists and the politics, but also with the involvement of the civil communities from all over the world and in the respect of cultural diversity.

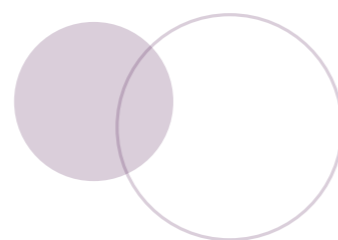
What can you expect from GESDA in a year from now? First of all, as we have pointed out, the Science Breakthrough Radar® is a rolling forecasting exercise of what is happening. So next year, you should receive the second Science Breakthrough Radar®. Some of its content will be what we have here, some other content might have been dropped out. And hopefully there will be some new content, because – as we are always saying – the speed with which science develops is enormous and accelerating. In that sense, this document can only be valid, relevant and trustful if we update it all the time.

The second thing is – you will see in the coming month – an increased work of the Situation Room. As I said, the starting point is the input that we have received from all of you. This will go now, together with all the input which are coming through the Digital Platform, into the situation rooms, in this confrontation between science and diplomacy. And I am hopeful that by next year, we will be able to present you two to three solutions. That would be the next step for GESDA. And I put this expectation out clearly: we cannot credibly be the answer to all the problems that we have been discussing. We have to be very clear that, by limiting our expectations, we might stay more trustful and relevant. So our expectation is: let us hopefully find two or three solutions for next year that we can present, that we can discuss. And afterwards, hopefully, we can also strengthen and widen, during this coming year, our partnerships so that perhaps next year we can already bring new partners into our work, that would then be the ones who are going to work under the guidance of GESDA towards the implementation of these ideas.

GESDA is a Swiss-founded foundation, and over the next year, we will have to talk to our founders, whom you all have met – from the Swiss government to the governments of the Canton and the City of Geneva. We have to talk to them and to convince them that GESDA can have a life after the first three years which were given to us when we started GESDA.

GESDA is Geneva-based, and I consider personally that our founders are very important for the credibility of our work. And Geneva is the right place to do it for all the reasons we have heard during those recent days. But at the same time, I also have to tell our founders that they should not forget that GESDA is an open, worldwide institution, working for all people of this world. Yes, GESDA is Geneva-based, but with an impact and solutions that are for the world. Thanks to this overwhelming quality of your participation, I have little doubt that our founders will wholeheartedly support the future of GESDA. So thank you, to all of you, very much, for the impressive participation you have showed during those days, and let us use together the future to build a better present.

Thank you very much.



More information

[Video recording of the Session on YouTube](#)

