



Special Session Proposal

Science Diplomacy in a Transition Era: The Abraham Accords as a Catalyst for Regional Responses to Global Challenges

Session Organiser: Luca Polizzi – UNU-CRIS, lpolizzi@cris.unu.edu

Correspoinsding convener: Luca Polizzi

Abstract

This Special Session proposes to examine science diplomacy as an emerging regional response to global challenges, focusing on the Middle East and, in particular, the new forms of scientific and technological cooperation enabled by the Abraham Accords. The region represents a critical laboratory for analysing how geopolitical realignments, climate vulnerabilities, energy transitions, and technological disruptions intersect. The Accords have opened unprecedented pathways for collaboration in renewable energy, hydrogen, climate adaptation, water technologies, food security, desert agriculture, and emerging digital technologies, with implications for regional stability and global governance.

This session explores how science diplomacy is being operationalised through concrete institutional practices, joint research initiatives, and the activities of epistemic communities across Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and neighbouring states in GCC. The session aims to critically evaluate how the Accords are reshaping regional cooperation architectures, fostering trust-building, and generating innovation-driven interdependencies, while also addressing structural limitations, asymmetries, and political risks.

The proposed session directly contributes to the ERSA2026 theme, “Global Challenges and Regional Responses in a Transition Era,” by highlighting how science diplomacy can act as a strategic instrument for addressing transboundary challenges in regions undergoing rapid transitions. It encourages dialogue across disciplinary and geographical boundaries and invites contributions that analyse science diplomacy, regional integration, innovation ecosystems, and geopolitical transformation.