



## University of the Arctic (UArctic)

### Thematic Network on Science Diplomacy

#### CONCEPT NOTE:

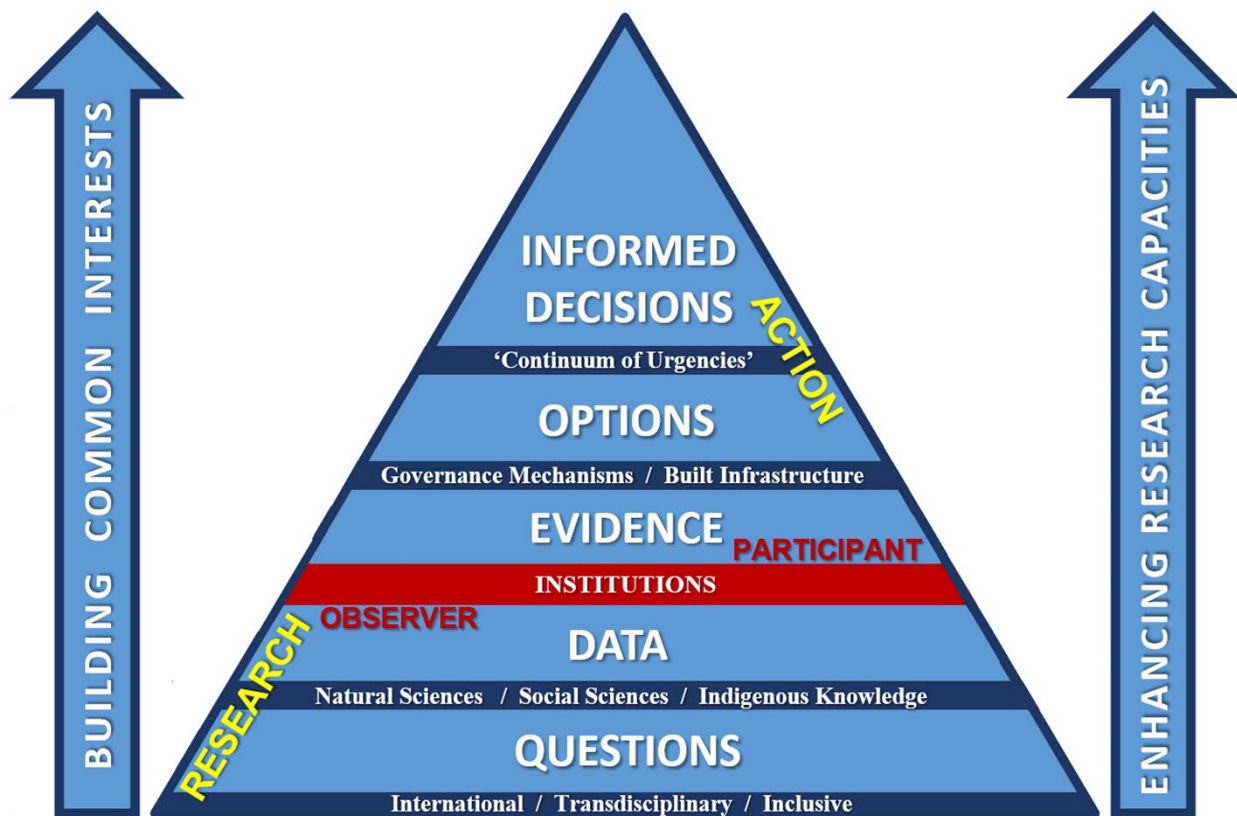
#### *Asking the Right Questions—Critical Themes in Science Diplomacy*

After more than three decades of cooperation in the Arctic toward increasing the scientific knowledge of the region and addressing issues of common concern through governance, collaboration came to abrupt pause in rapid response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. While many of the underlying logics for the suspension of relations has rationalities connected to concerns beyond the Arctic, for the Arctic region in particular, this disruption comes at a critical juncture with consequences set to ripple long into the future, by connecting governance arrangements in the Arctic to issues of *hard security*.”

Geopolitical tensions seeping into the Arctic realm positions science diplomacy an invaluable tool toward maintaining nodes of cooperation for ongoing governance and environmental challenges. As evident from history, science diplomacy played a significant role in facilitating scientific knowledge, scientific relationships and ultimately, intergovernmental relations and governance agendas. This demonstrates that science diplomacy has right toolkit for building towards a common future, even where disagreement exist, starting with questions rather than answers, positions or recommendations that engender political dynamics.

To promote the role and tools that science diplomacy can proffer within the changing dynamics of Arctic governance, the UArctic Network on Science Diplomacy is hosting a webinar series in 2024/2025 to explore futures of science diplomacy by speaking with scientists, practitioners, policy-makers, Arctic citizens and rightsholders to identify the important questions that we should be asking now about science diplomacy and its potential to solve problems in the Arctic.

In the same way that the Arctic was a laboratory for cooperation at the end of the Cold War with such positive results, we would now like to explore how science diplomacy can again act as a pivot for shaping the future discourse of cooperation and governance in the Arctic. *Asking the Right Questions* will be an agenda-setting conversation that will prioritise inquiries about what is important for the future of the Arctic and how science diplomacy can facilitate progress toward a more inclusive and secure future.



**FIGURE 1: PYRAMID OF INFORMED DECISIONMAKING** as an holistic methodology with science diplomacy to apply, train and refine across a ‘continuum of urgencies’ (following figure), characterizing the scope of an **informed decision**, as the apex goal with governance mechanisms and built infrastructure as well their coupling for sustainable development. With holistic integration, **questions of common concern** reveal the methods of science to study change, generating the necessary **data** to produce answers in a transdisciplinary manner. These stages of research are transformed into action with **evidence** for decisions, involving institutions and their decisionmakers. Across the data-evidence interface, the diplomacy with science simply is in revealing **options** (without advocacy), which can be used or ignored explicitly, respecting the institutions. Starting with questions among allies and adversaries underlies the skill to build common interests. The engine of informed decisionmaking operates with common-interest building, enhancing research capacities as a positive feedback with individuals contributing as observers and participants inclusively. See the Springer **INFORMED DECISIONMAKING FOR SUSTAINABILITY** book series.

