CONCEPT

Corporate Diplomacy: Non-Market Strategy, Social Licence and Host-Country Engagement

30 November – 4 December 2026
Amsterdam - Zuidas business district hotel



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Ref: 866_20775 **Date:** 30 November – 4 December 2026 **Location:** Amsterdam - Zuidas business district hotel **Fees:** 23500 SAR

Introduction:

Corporate diplomacy decides whether a company operating across borders keeps its access to markets when host governments change priorities, communities contest a project or activists target its supply chain. Many firms still leave these relationships to country offices, lobbyists or press teams acting without a shared strategy. This Core Concept course equips executives to run corporate diplomacy as a non-market strategy discipline: reading host-country power, earning a social licence to operate, engaging states, NGOs and multilateral bodies, and handling controversy. Participants produce a Corporate Diplomacy Plan for a case company entering a sensitive market.

Course Objectives:

- Distinguish corporate diplomacy from lobbying, public relations and state diplomacy, and set the mandate of an external affairs function in a multinational company
- Integrate non-market strategy with market strategy so that political, social and regulatory positions support commercial goals in each host country
- Map host-country actors, their influence and their expectations, and judge the strength of the company's social licence to operate at each site
- Direct engagement with host governments, civil society, local communities and multilateral bodies using representation, negotiation and coalition-building skills
- Oversee the monitoring of geopolitical issues, controversies and activist campaigns and decide the company's response and escalation route
- Approve a Corporate Diplomacy Plan with value indicators that links external relations to corporate strategy and ESG priorities

Target Audience:

- Executive committee members who carry accountability for the company's standing with foreign governments and host societies
- Leaders of external affairs, corporate affairs or international relations units in companies active in several host countries
- Country and regional heads who represent the group to host-country authorities, business councils and community leaders
- Sustainability and ESG leaders whose commitments to investors and communities depend on relations with local and international stakeholders
- Business development executives who lead entry into new or politically sensitive markets

Course Outline:

Day 1: Corporate Diplomacy Foundations and the Non-Market Environment

- Corporate Diplomacy, Lobbying, Public Relations and State Diplomacy: Roles and Boundaries
- Non-Market Environment Scan: Issues, Interests, Institutions and Information
- Company as a Diplomatic Actor: Legitimacy, Access and Mandate Across Host Countries
- External Affairs Function Designs: Headquarters Hub, Country Networks and Embedded Envoys
- Current-State Review of Host-Country Relationships and Diplomatic Exposure

Day 2: Non-Market Strategy, Social Licence and Host-Country Influence Models

- Integrated Strategy Canvas: Aligning Market and Non-Market Positions
- Social Licence to Operate Levels: Acceptance, Approval and Co-Ownership
- Host-Country Influence Mapping: Formal Authority, Informal Networks and Veto Players
- Stakeholder Power-Interest Grid Adapted for Transnational Operations
- Geopolitical Issue Radar: Sanctions Exposure, Trade Tensions and Political Transitions

Day 3: Business Diplomacy Skills and Multi-Actor Engagement

- Representation Protocol for Senior Envoys Meeting Ministers and Ambassadors
- Interest-Based Negotiation with Host Governments on Investment Terms and Local Content
- Structured Listening Sessions with Communities, Traditional Authorities and Local Leaders
- NGO Partnership Screening: Mission Fit, Independence and Shared Objectives
- Engagement Channels with Multilateral Bodies, Development Banks and Business Councils

Day 4: Controversies, Activist Campaigns and Diplomatic Risk

- Activist Campaign Anatomy: Targets, Tactics, Allies and Escalation Triggers
- Controversy Response Decision Tree: Engage, Concede, Hold Position or Exit
- Coalition Building with Peer Companies, Industry Bodies and Civil Society Partners
- ESG Commitment Alignment: Linking Diplomatic Positions to Human Rights and Climate Pledges
- External Relations Value Scorecard: Access Secured, Delays Avoided and Relationship Capital

Day 5: Case Study: Corporate Diplomacy Plan for a Sensitive Market Entry

- Case Brief: Infrastructure Company Entering a Politically Contested Host Market
- Case Actor Map and Social Licence Baseline for the Proposed Operation
- Engagement Sequencing Roadmap for Government, Community and NGO Actors
- Corporate Diplomacy Plan Drafting: Objectives, Envoys, Coalitions and Value Indicators
- Plan Defence Before a Simulated Board Committee and Host-Country Advisory Panel

Skills You Will Gain:

- Non-Market Strategy Integration
- Host-Country Influence Analysis
- Social Licence Assessment
- Geopolitical Issue Scanning
- Envoy Representation
- Multi-Stakeholder Negotiation
- Activist Campaign Response
- Cross-Border Coalition Building

Why Attend This Course:

- Leave with a Corporate Diplomacy Plan for a sensitive market entry, challenged by a simulated board and advisory panel
- Know which host-country actors can stall or unblock an operation, and how to earn their acceptance before problems surface
- Handle a controversy or activist campaign with a tested decision route instead of improvised statements
- Compare external affairs practice with executives from energy, mining, infrastructure, technology and consumer goods companies

Conclusion:

Companies operating across borders depend on relationships that no contract secures. The course moves from the boundaries of corporate diplomacy and the non-market environment, through integrated strategy, social licence levels, influence mapping and geopolitical issue scanning, to envoy representation, negotiation with host governments, community listening and multilateral engagement, then to activist campaigns, coalitions, ESG alignment and value measurement. The final day applies these tools to a contested market entry and produces a Corporate Diplomacy Plan ready for board review.