

Correspondence with the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

On 15 December 2020 the Chair wrote to Jeppe Kofod, Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs in the following terms:

Dear Minister Kofod,

I am writing to seek your perspective on Denmark's technological diplomacy ('Techplomacy') initiative. As part of an ongoing inquiry, the UK Foreign Affairs Committee is currently exploring the implications of technology for national security and how the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office might contribute to screening foreign investments in UK technology companies.

Given that technological diplomacy has been pioneered by the Danish MFA, I would be very interested in hearing your insights on:

- What are the key priorities of the Office of the Tech Ambassador, and how are these priorities to be delivered?
- What have been the main successes of the TechPlomacy initiative so far?
- Conversely, what are the main challenges the initiative has faced, and lessons learned?
- How you have identified which companies with whom to prioritise Denmark's diplomatic engagement?
- How has the Tech Ambassador been received by these companies?
- How helpful has the TechPlomacy initiative has been for improving the Danish government's understanding of the technology landscape, and of the security implications of technological developments?

Finally, I understand that Denmark intends to evolve its strategy and launch a 'Techplomacy 2.0'; we look forward to its publication and to capturing any lessons for the UK.

Tom Tugendhat MP

Chair of the UK Foreign Affairs Committee

The response from the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs was received on 21 January in an email, as follows:

1. What are the key priorities of the Office of the Tech Ambassador, and how are these priorities to be delivered?

The objective of Denmark's technological diplomacy is to promote a responsible, democratic and safe technological future. A key priority is to make sure that new and emerging technologies do not undermine democratic values and human rights whether driven by states or private companies. Efforts range from contributing to formation of global digital

norms and governance in international organisations to representing Danish interests vis-à-vis the private tech industry globally. The latter includes raising concrete cases and concerns on behalf of the Danish government and Danish authorities. Furthermore, it is an important priority to gather information on international tech trends and contribute to Denmark's digital policy formulation.

In early 2021, Denmark will launch a new Strategy for Technological Diplomacy that will structure efforts along three main priorities: Societal responsibility (of the tech industry), democracy and security. We are more than happy to share the strategy after publication and translation.

2. What have been the main successes of the TechPlomacy initiative so far?

Denmark has established high-level dialogue with the tech industry serving as a bridge between Danish government authorities and the tech industry to discuss timely issues and allow for collaboration and engagement. The Office of the Tech Ambassador has carried out a range of different tasks on behalf of Danish Authorities, e.g. The Ministry of Business, the Ministry of Defence, The Ministry of Children and Education, The Ministry of Climate, Energy and Supply, and The Ministry of Justice, such as representing specific cases and challenges, sought specific information and established relationships on ministerial level. For example, videos of a terror incident in Morocco involving a Danish citizen surfacing on social media were removed quickly due to a rapid effort from the tech ambassador.

Through reporting, analyses, and public diplomacy the tech diplomacy has contributed to Denmark's understanding of the strategic and geopolitical implications of technology development, the opportunities and risks associated with emerging technologies and the role and power of the private tech industry.

Techplomacy builds alliances and networks with like-minded countries to strengthen governments' position in negotiations and dialogue with the tech industry. To that end in April 2019, together with the Australian Cyber Ambassador, the Office of the Tech Ambassador convened more than twenty Tech and Cyber Ambassadors in San Francisco and Silicon Valley for three days of deliberations on technology, cybersecurity and foreign policy. In addition to closed-door meetings, the group engaged directly with companies such as Microsoft, Facebook, Google, Apple, Symantec and FireEye as well as universities, which allowed us to bridge the formal international negotiation tracks with key insights from tech leaders and researchers.

3. Conversely, what are the main challenges the initiative has faced, and lessons learned?

A key challenge has been to prioritise between the many areas and subjects related to technological development. Today, technology and digitalization relates to almost all government areas, and debates and discussions take place in most international organisations. Prioritizing efforts is a continuous task.

Given the novelty of emerging technology as an international policy area, the absence of cooperation and coordination among likeminded countries remains a challenge bilaterally as well as in international organisations. This is not least due to the information asymmetry between governments and the tech companies. An asymmetry Denmark's Techplomacy seeks to minimize.

A key lesson is that the large tech companies have different norms, business models and levels of maturity. This also meant that not all companies understood from the outset the necessity of speaking with governments on political issues. Some companies were open for dialogue from day one; others have been more reluctant to engage in discussions on challenging and at times uncomfortable political issues.

4. How you have identified which companies with whom to prioritise Denmark's diplomatic engagement?

The largest tech companies in the US, Europe and Asia have been the primary focus for Techplomacy's work given their significance for Danish society, economics and citizens. The office has also engaged with medium or smaller size tech companies within specific thematic areas such as cyber security. The companies have been identified through a combination of a general assessment of the companies' reach and influence on Danish citizens, as well as on a continuous, case-by-case identification depending on current events or needs in the government.

5. How has the Tech Ambassador been received by these companies?

See answer to question 3.

6. How helpful has the TechPlomacy initiative has been for improving the Danish government's understanding of the technology landscape, and of the security implications of technological developments?

As already mentioned, the Danish technological diplomacy has contributed to Denmark's understanding of the strategic and geopolitical implications of technology development through extensive reporting and analyses, both thematic and in flash formats. These have drawn on expertise from the tech industry and international organisations, and are often

written in cooperation with relevant embassies. They have been helpful in understanding geopolitical and foreign policy aspects of both technology development in general, and in relation specific policies in particular.

The office has also contributed directly to policy processes, both formally and informally. For example by pairing experts from Danish authorities with experts from the tech industry to discuss specific issues, and by coordinating reports on specific technology issues from embassies globally. Furthermore, our engagements with the cybersecurity industry has contributed to the Danish understanding of security implications in general and cybersecurity in particular.