**NOTE 9: FUNCTIONS OF A DIPLOMAT**

**9.0. INTRODUCTION**

Diplomacy act as a mean by which Diplomat maximise the interest of their home state at their host location or posting. As such, the purpose of Diplomacy is promoting the interests of states or non-state actors at the expense of other players as well as to maintain international peace and order. Also, it is important to note that, it was the **1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations** that codified and standardised centuries of diplomatic practice into a generally accepted mode of operation.

**9.1. WHO IS A DIPLOMAT?**

A diplomat is a person accredited or appointed to represent his/her states interest abroad. There are two broad types of Diplomats, which can be the **Career** and **Non-Career Diplomat**. The Career Diplomat is professionally trained in the act of Diplomacy and armed with adequate knowledge of International Relations. While the **Non-Career Diplomats** are technocrats: with specialised knowledge in a particular area of knowledge not privy to the understanding of the Career diplomat. **Non-Career Diplomats** can also be persons who can command the confidence of their government or head of states (usually they are **politician** or **important personalities**)

**9.2. FUNCTIONS OF A DIPLOMAT**

A Diplomat is saddled with various functions both to their States and to their head of state/government. When posted abroad, a Diplomat function under the head of their missions. **The 1961 Vienna on Diplomatic Relations** prescribed four main functions of a Diplomat in international affairs. These functions are the roles and responsibilities of a diplomat in carrying out in the course of their duties. They are;

**9.2.1. REPRESENTATION**

Diplomats are the representative of their **head of state or government** to other governments/State. When posted to a foreign mission, they are the representative of their government at all times. They represent their government at **Ceremonies** (swearing-in of leaders, national or cultural day, international summits, etc.). Also at **Diplomatic functions** (accreditation exercise of an incoming ambassador, the gathering of the host country diplomatic corps, diplomatic conference etc.). Likewise in the **media** of the host government (e.g. the United States Ambassador made an appearance on Channels Television to reassure Nigeria of the US support during the 2019 general election) etc. They are the **mouthpiece** of their government and the **official diplomatic means of communication** between governments. As representatives, they have a duty to be **discrete** in their action so as not to put to dis-repute the image of their states. To functions as an effective representative of their host government, they must exemplify the following traits **Restrain, Integrity, Dignity and Professionalism**.

**9.2.2. NEGOTIATION**

Negotiation entails the act of communication exchange between and amongst parties to reach an **agreement or the settlement of disputes**. This agreement may be mutually beneficial to the parties involved or otherwise. Likewise, ditto is applicable to the disputes. For a Diplomat, in the process of official communication between officials of different governments, agreements called treaties covenant, conventions, etc., regulating different areas of the bilateral or multilateral relations of States need to be arrived at and modified from time to time. The negotiation skills of the Diplomat are essential here, as the Diplomat is his government representative in such negotiation, and such negotiation is binding on states. Hence, negotiation can range **from protocol agreement; to economic, financial and trade relations, socio-cultural relations** etc. Here it is expected that a diplomat should be equipped with **knowledge of the subject matter** of the negotiation. Also, a Diplomat must be **flexible** and ready to **compromise** when the situation warrants it (it is like a diplomat is haggling in the market for the best price). Likewise, a Diplomat must be **sensitivity to taking the initiative** and **coalition building**.

**9.2.3. REPORTING/ INFORMATION GATHERING**

Here, it the function of the Diplomat to **monitor situations in all areas of the society** of their host or receiving government to the extent they affect the interest of the Diplomat’s home government. Hence, Diplomats are expected to be observant of **the political, economic, religious, socio-cultural etc. terrain**s of his host government to identify pieces of information that are relevant to his home government interest and advantage. A Diplomat can gather information through **public access channels** (news media, public gathering, institutional reports etc.), via his government foreign intelligence apparatus (deployed to acquire data in the host country) or through the cultivation of **relationships and networks** (friends and diplomatic counter-parts) in his/her host state. Such pieces of information are expected to be sent back to his home government. It means a Diplomat must be skilled enough to send home **detailed and factual reports** of his observations which affect his host government. This report forms recommendations that can form the inputs of how the home government will react to the situation (e.g. the evacuation of US citizens’ quarantined for coronavirus in a ferry in Japan, was informed by reports). Diplomats must ensure the avenue for information gathering must conform to international law so as not to be declared as a spy (this does not mean a Diplomat cannot breach such in furtherance of National Interests).

**9.2.4. PROTECTION**

Here, a diplomat expected to protect the **interests** of both his state and that of its citizens travelling, visiting or residing outside the shores of their state within the limits of international law. They can do this by protecting the national interest in the area of diplomatic, economic, national pride and commercial, cultural etc. Some qualities a Diplomat must have here are patriotism, loyalty, national pride, good knowledge of their home and foreign state national policy. Also, under protection, you find the state performing consular services, which can be **general** or **emergency service**.