

## **Lehlogonolo Phaahla**

Thank you for this opportunity to reflect on some the insights and my experience regarding this programme. All protocol observed.

The first time when I saw the advert, it was around August/September.

I read about the specifications/requirements of the program, and I thought to myself, this is something that I can do.

Because all along I had the desire of representing my country, South Africa as a young diplomat, on various issues.

When I entered the program, one realised that there is so much to learn/grasp from the program itself.

In my view, the program is a success and I hope also the coming one is going to be very enriching, when it comes to attracting the young leaders, who are looking forward to being part of this program.

In terms of my experience for instance, this is one of those unique programs whereby one deals with real life scenarios.

The reason I'm saying this is because of the guest speakers, who came and shared their real life experiences, on what it takes to be a diplomat.

One of the case studies they shared with us regarding the challenges in the field.

Secondly, the uniqueness of this program was the opportunity to interact with fellows, who had different perspectives about Africa and Australia. As we interacted, we realized that there was much to learn from each other through this program.

My highlight was when we engaged with one of the guest speakers, who had over 34 years of experience in foreign service, who gave us some tips of what it takes to be a diplomat.

This is what he said under the themes; Diplomatic Craft and Careers and Evolving Geopolitical Dynamics.

One said (which was a take away for me) "A role of a diplomat is mainly to observe the development of the host country and report home... the role of a diplomat is not to get involved in the politics of the host country"

He said this was the general rule in the field, in order for us to last long...

Second one, who was part of the peacekeeping missions said” was of the challenges in peacekeeping mission was, when you are an observer, your role is more of observing and compiling reports, and not necessarily to report”

He said this was done to respect the role/task one is performing, in terms of reporting lines.

***To the upcoming fellows who are looking to apply for this great opportunity, I would like to say, start today, think thoroughly on what you can offer in terms of this program, because this is one of those programs whereby you as an individual you will be capacitated.***

At the same time, **take this opportunity and engage with the contents, in terms of what are the requirements and have strong motivation, which will set you apart from the rest of the applicants, who are aspiring to be part of this journey.**

**As I conclude,** I would like to reflect on some of the recommendations that I contributed towards the ELAAD brief.

1. When I was talking to Australia and the world, I said, Africa should be approached as continent that is diverse culturally, economically and linguistically... not as a country. So that a dream of collaboration, working together and partnerships, and resolving challenges which face all of us can be realized.
2. To advocate for science diplomacy, starting at institutions of higher learning, in order to leverage knowledge which is generated at these institutions, to inform policy, shape public opinion and to influence the office bears.

As I conclude, I would urge the future applicants to **apply, apply, apply.**