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Public Diplomacy in the News: USAID Cuts, Brazil's Film Award, & Under Secretary for PD Candidate ^[1]

“Public Diplomacy in the News” is a CPD Blog series by Andrew Dubbins that spotlights noteworthy stories on public diplomacy topics such as cultural diplomacy, nation branding, exchange programs, international events and conferences, digital diplomacy, and strategic global communications.

Trump slashes 90% of USAID aid, halting global programs. The Trump administration announced the elimination of over 90% of USAID's foreign aid contracts, cutting \$60 billion in global assistance and marking a significant shift away from traditional U.S. foreign aid policy.

The move, justified as a reduction of “institutional drift” and waste, aligns with President Trump and ally Elon Musk's goal of reducing federal government size. The cuts have halted thousands of U.S.-funded programs worldwide, impacting crucial initiatives like Ebola containment and HIV/AIDS treatment in Africa. Legal battles are ongoing, with the Supreme Court temporarily blocking a lower court's order to release billions in frozen aid funds.

Ellen Knickmeyer and Matthew Lee / AP

Brazil shines as 2025 Cannes film market's Country of Honor. Brazil has been named the Country of Honor for the 2025 Cannes Film Market, coinciding with the 78th Festival de Cannes from May 13-21. This recognition celebrates Brazil's thriving film and audiovisual industry, highlighted by Walter Salles' “I'm Still Here,” which was nominated for three Academy Awards and became the first Brazilian film to win in the international feature category. Organized by Brazil's Ministry of Culture in partnership with Instituto Guimarães Rosa and the Brazilian Embassy in Paris, the event will feature work-in-progress showcases, networking events, and international co-production presentations. The honor is also part of the Brazil-France Season, celebrating 200 years of diplomatic relations. Past countries of honor at Cannes Film Market include Switzerland (2024), Spain (2023), and India (2022).

Elsa Keslassy / Variety

Sarah Rogers set for public diplomacy role. President Trump is set to nominate several top State Department officials, including Sarah Rogers as under secretary for public diplomacy. Rogers, a New York lawyer known for defending the National Rifle Association on free speech grounds, has no foreign policy experience but aligns with Trump's stance on social media content moderation. Her nomination suggests a push to expand free speech policies globally.

Semafor / Mathias Hammer, Eleanor Mueller, and Ben Smith

Global showdown over nature funding at COP16. Global negotiations at the COP16 biodiversity summit in Rome are facing significant challenges as countries struggle to agree on funding for nature conservation amid geopolitical tensions. The primary dispute is between wealthy and developing nations over how to bridge a \$700 billion funding gap needed to protect biodiversity. Developing countries are advocating for a new global fund to streamline access to resources, but wealthier nations oppose this, fearing increased bureaucracy and financial burden on governments. Despite deep divisions, negotiators remain cautiously optimistic that a compromise can be reached, with a proposed roadmap to evaluate and enhance existing financial mechanisms while considering a new global instrument by 2030.

Phoebe Weston / The Guardian

U.S. travel system unprepared for 2026 World Cup surge, report warns. A new report by the U.S. Travel Association warns that the U.S. air travel system is unprepared for the influx of six million visitors expected for the 2026 FIFA World Cup due to slow visa processing times, outdated security technology, and staffing shortages. The report highlights that visa wait times can exceed six months, which could result in a significant loss of visitors and \$19 billion in tourism revenue. TSA is also projected to face unprecedented traveler volumes, potentially leading to long security wait times. To address these challenges, the report recommends increasing staffing for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, investing in automated identity verification technology, and creating a new National Vetting Service dedicated to visa

adjudication.

Paul Livengood / WFAA
