Civil Society, the United Nations, and G7/G8 Summitry

Peter Hajnal, University of Toronto
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Introduction

In today's interdependent, globalized world, no institution–whether governmental, intergovernmental, business, or civil society organization–can exist in a silo and work in isolation. Governance implies complex, ever-changing interaction between and among various actors.[1] This paper examines and compares the relationship of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) and coalitions with the United Nations (UN) and, in the context of summitry, with the G7/G8. It then looks briefly at the role of information and communications technology for civil society, and ends with concluding remarks.

Civil Society Relations with the United Nations System

Non-state actors were present at the very beginning of the UN. At the 1945 San Francisco conference, US trade unions successfully pushed for the inclusion of human rights in the UN Charter. Since then, civil society-UN relations have developed in an increasingly complex though uneven manner.

Formal Relations

The UN has had a long-standing, highly structured relationship with NGOs. This relationship has taken various forms and has had as its locus several points of contact. Foremost among these is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which has set up consultative relations with NGOs under Article 7l of the UN Charter. These relations were revised by ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, adopted on 25 July 1996.[2] The "general" consultative category consists of a small number of large, well-established NGOs that are "concerned with most of the activities of the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies" according to Resolution 1996/31; others are termed "special"–these tend to be smaller NGOs interested only in certain ECOSOC activities; and the largest number–more specialized, technical NGOs–are on ECOSOC's "roster".[3] Representatives of these NGOs, especially in the "general" and "special" categories, participate at certain UN meetings and are able to have input into the agenda or to act as expert consultants; they also report periodically on their activities to ECOSOC. These NGOs have formed their own association, the

Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO).

The UN Department of Public Information (DPI) has had its own long-standing arrangements with a host of NGOs; these are expected to assist DPI and the UN in general in disseminating UN-related information; they are thus essentially an extension of the information arm of the UN.[4] To bring these NGOs to the UN, DPI has organized annual conferences for them for 55 years. The UN Secretariat has an NGO Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and an NGO Section in the DPI, both within ECOSOC. In addition, there is an ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations which reviews NGO applications for consultative or roster status.

Besides ECOSOC and DPI, the UN has a number of focal points throughout the Secretariat for contact with NGOs relevant to various units and programmes. NGOs have come to be recognized as a "source of vital experience, expertise and information" and as providers of new insights and approaches in most areas on the UN's work: development, human rights, women's issues, disarmament, peacekeeping, emergency assistance, and many others. The activities of these NGOs range from policy formulation and standard-setting to operational activities and advocacy.[5]

Most specialized agencies, programmes and bodies of the larger UN system have more or less formal association with NGOs. The oldest such relationship is constitutionally entrenched in the International Labour Organization (ILO) which, since its establishment after the end of World War I, has featured a tripartite governance structure, incorporating representatives of governments, employers' organizations, and trade unions. To cite another example, UNESCO has long had a large number of NGOs associated with its programmes and activities, from literacy campaigns to the Man in the Biosphere programme. The Bretton Woods institutions–technically UN specialized agencies–were slower than other member organizations of the UN family to build relations with NGOs, but both the World Bank and more recently the International Monetary Fund now have a civil society nexus. A UN system-wide interagency institution established to assist and advise the numerous associated NGOs is the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS).[6]

The UN's Global Conferences in the 1990s

NGOs and other civil society coalitions have been active at UN conferences at least since the early 1970s; for example, women's groups have used the UN as a forum for advancing women's rights since the 1975 International Women's year, continuing with the International Women's Decade (1976-1985), and for the Decade's mid-term Copenhagen conference in 1980 and the End-Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985. But it was in the 1990s that UN-NGO relations changed drastically. The crucial turning point was the

1992 Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), where civil society really came into its own. The environmental movement, development-oriented NGOs and other civil society groups worked hard to expand their influence on the UN and its member governments. CSOs learned about the preparatory process and began lobbying, monitoring events, and participating in whatever was unfolding in the lead-up to Rio. Generally, the UN was supportive of this process; it funded NGOs from the South and engaged in consultations.

This became the pattern applied at subsequent UN-organized world conferences in the 1990s (for example, the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the 1996 Istanbul Second UN Conference on Human Settlements, the 1996 Rome World Food Summit, the 1997 "Rio + 5" (the five-year review of the Rio Summit), the 1998 Rome UN Conference on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court.[7] The pattern continues into the 21st century; there were several parallel civil society events at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development (Rio + 10).

There have been civil society successes due to engagement in "new diplomacy". Two major examples are the Ottawa process and the resulting Landmine Ban Treaty, and the establishment of the International Criminal Court.[8] NGO involvement was a significant factor in the achievement of international consensus and government commitment on difficult policy challenges–for example, on issues of women's rights and reproductive health–at major UN conferences. The participation of civil society has provided the UN not only with technical expertise but has increased public awareness of global issues, and contributed to greater democracy, transparency and accountability on the part of UN member governments.[9]

One institutional response of the UN to these changes was a review of consultative arrangements and rules, carried out from 1993 to 1996 when ECOSOC adopted Resolution 1996/31 and Decision 1996/297. The two main aims of this process were to review and update long-standing ECOSOC provisions for NGO consultative status; and, more controversially, to examine the matter of NGO participation in "all areas of work of the UN", including the General Assembly and the Security Council. Resolution 1996/31 addressed the first, and dealt with such matters as the eligibility of various types of national and regional NGOs for consultative status; change in the nomenclature of consultative categories (the "general" category used to be known as Category I and the "special" category as Category II); and procedures for NGO accreditation to and participation in UN international conferences. A significant achievement here was making national, subregional and regional NGOs, including the national affiliates of international NGOs, eligible for consultative status with ECOSOC.[10] ECOSOC decision 1996/297 dealt with the "all areas of work of the UN" aspect of the review. However, the proposal to extend formal NGO

access to the General Assembly and beyond ran into opposition from some member governments and has stalled for lack of political will.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has on many occasions emphasized the importance–indeed, the necessity–of UN-civil society partnership[11] but on a practical working level the relationship is not always easy, even though cooperation between the UN and NGOs has often been mutually beneficial. Access to UN premises, officials and meetings has been problematic for some NGOs and their members; some UN officials and institutions have resisted. In fairness, however, the UN, with its strained resources, could not possibly cope with the potentially huge numbers of organizations and people involved, and with the sometimes unreasonable demands and occasionally reprehensible behaviour of certain individuals associated with a few NGOs. It is also important to realize that while physical access to the Secretariat building is in the purview of the UN administration, permission for NGOs to attend meetings–let alone speak at those meetings–is the prerogative of governments of UN member states.

Taking up the challenge of the ECOSOC review, the Secretary-General issued a report in 1998 that included proposals to enhance NGO participation throughout the UN system by various means, such as the establishment of a trust fund to help NGOs of the South to participate in UN activities. Many NGOs found this short of what they wished; for example, access for NGOs to General Assembly debates.[12] Such access has been only given on an episodic, ad hoc basis. Recently it has been reported that the UN is establishing a group of eminent persons to explore the challenges of enhancing civil society's role in the world organization and make recommendations to strengthen that partnership.[13]

The desirability of greater UN openness toward civil society has been raised outside the UN with increasing urgency. In its 1995 report, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, the Commission on Global Governance noted the essential contribution of civil society to global governance and the need for the UN to provide appropriate space for civil society participation. One of the Commission's proposals was to convene an annual forum of civil society that would consist of representatives of CSOs accredited to the General Assembly.[14]

Five years after the Commission's report, world civil society convened a Millennium Forum at the UN from 22 to 26 May 2000. The Forum brought together some 1350 representatives of more than 1000 NGOs and other CSOs from 106 countries. Discussion included the broadest spectrum of concerns: peace, security and disarmament[15]; poverty eradication, including debt cancellation and social development; human rights; sustainable development and the environment; facing the challenges of globalization; and strengthening and democratizing the UN and other international organizations. In his keynote address to the participants of the Forum, Secretary-General Annan praised "the pioneering role of NGOs on a range of vital issues, from human rights to the environment, from development to disarmament [and stated:] We in the United Nations know that during the cycle of world conferences of the last decade, it was you who

set the pace on many issues. You did that through advocacy and through action; by pressuring governments and by working with governments as partners and implementers."[16] The main document, issued at the conclusion of the Forum with the title *We the Peoples: Millennium Forum Declaration and Agenda for Action*, sets forth a series of proposals for governments, for the UN and for civil society itself.[17] The Declaration, along with six thematic reports, was subsequently submitted to the UN's own Millennium Assembly in the fall of 2000.[18] The Assembly duly received the document but has done little with it in practical terms, to the great disappointment of civil society. This is unfortunate; the Millennium Development Goals, if they are to be implemented, must have active and broad civil society participation and support. This has been recognized by the Secretary-General, who emphasized in his first annual report on the implementation of these goals that whatever progress has been made was by reliance on strategies "that combine the energies of member states, international institutions ... with those of others, notably the private sector, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic foundations, academic and cultural institutions and other parts of civil society."[19]

If regular civil society/General Assembly links are difficult politically, links between civil society and the Security Council are even more challenging and sensitive. Nevertheless, in a 1999 addendum to *Our Global Neighbourhood*, the Commission on Global Governance notes that "members of the [Security] Council now hold regular sessions with a group of selected NGOs to discuss questions of common interest" and states that the Council "should take further steps towards regularising procedures for gaining the substantive and timely input of NGOs and other civil society groups with expertise on the issues on its agenda."[20]

The growing importance of new informal practices in UN-civil society interaction was inevitable in view of the fact that formal extension of NGO access has not been politically possible at the UN. NGO representatives participate more frequently in hearings, panels, briefings and dialogue with governments. There are many other instances of this development. The GA has organized panels with representatives from NGOs, academics and business. The Commission on Social Development has begun dialogue with NGOs. The Commission on the Status of Women and other ECOSOC bodies, too, have included NGO representatives on various panels. The Commission on Sustainable Development has organized multi-stakeholder dialogues in its work programme. Yet another example of these new, informal patterns of governance is the provision on NGO participation in various UN bodies: the governing body of UNAIDS has five seats for NGOs and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Humanitarian Affairs has three NGO seats.[21]

The increasingly clear factor of global values shared by the UN and civil society is another factor driving these new types of informal interaction between the two actors. This is true in many areas: peace, human rights, social justice, to take some examples. But the desire for institutionalization of these

relations persists, and manifests itself from time to time in proposals such as a Global People's Assembly or Parliament.

Civil Society and the G7/G8*

In sharp contrast with the UN, the G7/G8 is a more informal, flexible and by-and-large non-bureaucratic institution that lacks the two main characteristics of more structured international governmental organizations (IGOs): a constitutive intergovernmental agreement, and a secretariat. It follows, therefore, that civil society-G7/G8 relations, too, are largely informal in nature. Of course, individual G8 countries have their own G8-related bureaucracies. Although practices and structures vary from country to country, there are different government departments that incorporate units responsible for continuous monitoring, co-ordination and follow-up of G7/G8-related activities and issues, both at the summit level and at lower (ministerial and task- force) levels of the broader G7/G8 system. In some instances that system as a whole has in some instances created bureaucratic structures; two cases in point are the now-defunct G7 Support Implementation Group that had a small secretariat in Moscow, and the new G20 financial forum that has its own small secretariat. All this has implications for civil society interaction with the G7/G8 system and with individual G8 member governments. The history of that interaction may be divided into four phases.

Phase 1 (1975-1983): Civil Society and the G7 Ignore Each Other

As implied above, the G7/G8 saw itself from the very beginning of G7 summitry in 1975 as an informal, nonbureaucratic forum of the leaders of the most advanced market-economy countries with a democratic system of governance. Recognition of civil-society groups as interlocutors seems not to have entered the (publicly expressed) consciousness of the G7 leaders and their support apparatus. On the other side, the power and importance of the G7 as a discrete entity does not appear to have been recognized during this phase by NGOs and broader civil society.

Phase 2 (1984-1994): Civil Society Recognizes the G7

As the summit agenda expanded to embrace many issues beyond the early focus on macroeconomic policy co-ordination,[22] civil society began to see the G7 as a legitimate target both for lobbying and for

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* For a more complete discussion of the civil society-G7/G8 nexus see Peter I. Hajnal, "Civil Society Encounters the G7/G8", in *Civil Society in the Information Age*, 215-42. Edited by Peter I. Hajnal (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002).

opposing. Many of these new G7 issues have been crucial to a wide variety of NGOs and civil-society coalitions. More generally, it was becoming common public knowledge that the G7 was indeed a powerful group that had evolved into a major global institution.[23]

In addition to pre-summit lobbying of individual G7 governments by business, labour and agricultural representatives, initial civil-society reaction to the G7 took rather an undifferentiated form: the alternative summits. For some years, these counter-summits generally went by the name "The Other Economic Summit" or TOES, and sometimes "people's summit" or "citizens' summit". The first TOES was organized by the London-based TOES/UK–later called New Economics Foundation–and took place simultaneously with the 1984 London G7 Summit. TOES described itself as "an international non-governmental forum for the presentation, discussion, and advocacy of the economic ideas and practices upon which a more just and sustainable society can be built–'an economics as if people mattered'".[24] In 1985, 1986 and 1987 TOES sent delegations to the G7 summits; starting with 1988, TOES has met in an event parallel with the summit, although after 1998 not always using the same collective name. Its prominence has declined in favour of more focused, issue-oriented civil-society approaches to the G7 (and, to a lesser extent, to the G8). Each year's TOES featured a civil-society coalition, with varying NGO membership, meeting in the G7/G8 summit city. These counter-summits ran workshops and demonstrations, and produced press releases and often a counter-communiqué critical of the official G7/G8 communiqué.[25] It appears that after 1999 TOES became inactive. Harriet Friedmann states that "[i]n the 1990s, TOES morphed into teach-ins and similar gatherings under the rubric of the International Forum on Globalization."[26] A much stronger people's summit (discussed below) was to emerge later.

Civil society in many instances took issue-specific approaches. For example, the environmental movement lobbied the G7 as early as 1988, and in 1991 an "Enviro-summit" met in London a few city blocks from the official G7 summit site.

Phase 3 (1995-1997): The G7/G8 Recognizes Civil Society

The G7, on its part, was slower to acknowledge civil society. The terms "civil society" and "NGO" were not used in official G7 documents until the 1995 Halifax Summit. The Halifax communiqué refers to NGOs and civil society in the context of promoting sustainable development and the reform of international financial institutions, adding that the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions should "encourage countries to follow participatory development strategies and support governmental reforms that assure transparency and public accountability, a stable rule of law, and an active civil society". In the same document, in the section "Reinforcing Coherence, Effectiveness and Efficiency of Institutions", the G7 undertakes that "[t]o increase overall coherence, cooperation and cost effectiveness we will work with

others to encourage ... improved coordination among international organizations, bilateral donors and NGOs".[27]

The Halifax reference to civil society was only the beginning. The 1996 Lyon Summit, which began the fourth seven-year cycle of summitry, spoke out even more strongly about the positive role of civil society. In its economic communiqué, under "Implementing a New Global Partnership For Development", it refers to the need for "a strengthened civil society" in that partnership.[28] The communiqué of the 1997 Denver Summit of the Eight goes further, "reaffirm[ing] the vital contribution of civil society" to the environment, democratic governance and poverty eradication.[29] Subsequent G7/G8 Summits have similarly acknowledged–at least in the language of their official documents–the increasingly important role of civil society in a number of sectors.

Other levels of the G7/G8 system also took up the civil society nexus. By 1996, when G7 environment ministers met in Cabourg, France (9-10 May), they chose as one of their main themes the mobilisation of civil society; the Cabourg communiqué has several references to NGOs.[30] Later, more ministerial fora (the G8 environment ministers, the Trade Ministers Quadrilateral and others), as well as various G7/G8 task forces and expert groups, have expressed their willingness to engage civil society and their appreciation of the importance of engaging all stakeholders. This marks a clear trend: the G7/G8 system has recognized the increasing importance of civil society. This developing relationship reflects the evolution and maturing of both civil society and the G7/G8.

Phase 4 (1998-): Civil Society Grows Stronger and More Sophisticated

Birmingham, Cologne, Okinawa

The 1998 Birmingham Summit was a watershed in G7/G8 interaction with civil society. It was there that the Jubilee 2000 coalition lobbied for debt relief and organized a spectacular human chain of 70,000 peaceful demonstrators who surrounded the Summit site and presented a petition to the leaders, asking for debt cancellation. This prompted an unprecedented G7/G8 reaction: British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on behalf of the G8, responded to the petition in a separate document of the summit.[31] In an additional statement, Blair paid tribute to the Jubilee 2000 campaign, for the dignified manner in which it demonstrated in Birmingham, and for making a most persuasive case for debt relief."[32] Jubilee and its successor organizations have been supported by celebrities ranging from the Irish rock star Bono and former boxing champion Muhammad Ali to Pope John Paul II, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The Jubilee movement has displayed impressive tactical and strategic savvy. It understands the workings of the G7/G8 system very well. For example, during the year 2000, leading up to the Okinawa Summit, Jubilee followed and publicized the customary pre-summit visits of Japanese prime ministers Keizo Obuchi, then Yoshiro Mori, to the other summit countries. It staged demonstrations at G7/G8 ministerial meetings. It is familiar with the sherpa and sous-sherpa process.[33] It monitors and communicates the performance of G7 governments, and demands that those governments implement their past commitments.

All this has given the whole debt issue a high public profile that governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) would find difficult to match. The idiom could not be more different from that customarily used by governments, IGOs and the G7 itself. Although it is impossible to measure the precise impact of Jubilee 2000 on G7 governments, there is a strong perception that it is influential. A spokesperson for the World Bank stated: Jubilee 2000 "has managed to put a relatively arcane issue–that of international finance and development–on the negotiating table throughout the world. The pledges Clinton and [UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon] Brown have made [to debt relief] would not have happened without Jubilee 2000. It's one of the most effective global lobbying campaigns I have ever seen."[34] And the *Financial Times* wrote in its 17 February 1999 issue: "When a plea for debt relief becomes the common cause of a coalition that embraces both the Pope and the pop world, creditors should take notice."[35]

In the lead-up to the Okinawa Summit the Japanese government made clear its determination, as G8 Chair for 2000, to reach out beyond the G8 to developing and other countries, IGOs, the private sector and civil society. This attitude of openness was in evidence before and during the summit in several ways:

- ahead of the Okinawa Summit the Japanese government appointed, as part of its summit planning team, a director general for civil society participation.[36] This official was in regular contact with a number of civil-society groups
- Japan sponsored or hosted several pre-summit events involving civil society. It held an international symposium on the role of NGOs in conflict prevention, sponsored by the Japan Institute for International Affairs, was held on 9-10 June 2000 in Tokyo with the support of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Japanese government established an NGO centre for the duration of the summit–an important initiative that has not since been repeated but bears revisiting by future summit hosts. The centre (where 43 Japanese and international NGOs were registered) provided meeting and work facilities, including access to computers, telephones, photocopiers and other equipment. In all, 43 Japanese and international NGOs were registered at the centre.[37] The centre allowed civil-society proximity, though

not necessarily adequate access, to the site of G8 meetings and the Summit Media Centre. In sum, the NGO Centre was a useful though imperfect resource, closely controlled by the Japanese government

- There was a dialogue between the Japanese government and civil-society leaders, both in Europe prior to the summit, and in Japan on the opening day of the summit. Prime Minister Mori's meeting with representatives of nine NGOs (these were selected on a first-come-first-served basis) on 21 July was presented by the Japanese government as a new initiative. In fact, it was at the 1998 Birmingham Summit that civil society had its first (and perhaps best so far) official dialogue with the G7/G8 as represented by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and where Clare Short (Secretary of State for International Development), on behalf of Blair, accepted the 1.4 million signatures amassed by the Jubilee campaign.[38] Although Okinawa reconfirmed the validity of consultation and dialogue, G8 governments other than the Japanese host did not reach out to civil society sufficiently.

The trend of largely peaceful demonstrations continued before and during the 1999 Cologne Summit and the 2000 Okinawa Summits. But demonstrations and street theatre are just one aspect of civil society action, although this is what tends to garner most media attention. Year-round lobbying and advocacy, as well as preparing and disseminating policy papers, are among other facets of serious work by NGOs and other civil society groups. In the course of such activities, NGOs often consult governments, international organizations, academic experts, businesses and other stakeholders. In many cases, this type of action has allowed civil society to make a real impact on official policy.

Genoa

Just prior to the 2001 Genoa Summit, the G8 foreign ministers moved their pre-summit meeting of 7 July from Portofino–the previously announced venue–to Rome mainly because of concern about the presence of up to 200,000 demonstrators, a small but vocal percentage of whom were prepared to use disruptive or even violent tactics. At the Genoa Summit itself, venues and activities were severely restricted by the protests outside. It was out of concern for security that the local hosts of the G8 hired a luxury cruiser, the *Spirit of Europe*, to house all but one of the G8 leaders (George W. Bush stayed at the harbourfront Jolly Hotel Marina). The prefecture of Genoa took various security measures–setting up a red zone, a surrounding yellow zone, and closing most transportation access to the city. Security measures went as far as deploying antiaircraft batteries along the runways of Genoa's Cristoforo Colombo airport. This seemed excessive at the time, but later, in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Italian Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini reportedly said that Osama bin Laden's terrorist network had threatened to kill President Bush and other G8 leaders.[39]

Several NGO groups had met local authorities in Genoa ahead of the summit to discuss plans for peaceful protest. Responsible civil-society groups had made clear their intention to demonstrate and protest peacefully against economic globalization and for more progress on debt relief. They expressed concern that anarchist and other potentially disruptive or violent groups would jeopardize peaceful, lawful, democratic protest. The Genoa Social Forum (GSF), an umbrella organisation of some 700 international, Italian and local Genoa-based NGOs and civil-society coalitions included Drop the Debt but also *Ya Basta!*, an Italian anarchist organization[40] (though essentially a nonviolent one). It was unclear from the start how this kind of contradiction could be resolved, especially in light of the announcement by GSF that some of its member groups "would attempt peacefully to invade the red zone during the planned 'day of civil disobedience' on Friday July 20", the first day of the summit.[41] GSF as a whole planned three sets of demonstrations in the officially permitted area. The Jubilee Movement's Drop the Debt met Italian national and local government representatives in June 2001 to negotiate plans for peaceful demonstrations. It was also reported that Drop the Debt and several other respected aid agencies had "drawn up contingency plans to avoid the Italian city during the summit on July 20-22 if a repeat of the violence that accompanied the recent European Union meeting in Gothenburg seem[ed] likely."[42]

The violence exceeded everyone's expectations. G8 leaders and most NGO groups deplored the clashes. In a special statement issued on 21 July (the first official document of the Genoa G8 Summit), the leaders recognized and praised the role of peaceful protest and argument, but condemned unequivocally the violence and anarchy perpetrated by a small minority. And the final communiqué of 22 July reaffirmed the right of peaceful protesters to have their voices heard and again deplored the violence and vandalism of those who seek to disrupt discussion and dialogue.[43]

Civil society groups, on their part, condemned the violence in equally strong terms. Oxfam stated in a 20 July press release that "violent disruption of international meetings doesn't help reach a solution, and it certainly doesn't help the poor. It drowns out the voice of many thousands of peaceful and serious people arguing for AIDS treatment and deeper debt relief."[44] Adrian Lovett, director of Drop the Debt, added: "Peaceful protest works, and it has made a hugely positive impact on recent G8 Summits. The violence we have seen in Genoa achieves nothing. Peaceful campaigners must reflect on how we make sure our concerns are addressed without the risk of hijack by violent extremists."[45] Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) put its condemnation in even stronger terms: "We take a sharp distance from every kind of violence and from those that in one way or another have chosen to manipulate these days in Genoa and created an atmosphere of violence and aggression–be it from the side of the radical demonstrators or the side of the police".[46]

Predictably, the media paid its closest attention to the violence. Several G8 leaders expressed their frustration at this disproportionate news coverage to the detriment of reporting the actual deliberations of the G7 and G8.

A whole spectrum of issues was represented in Genoa by a variety of NGO groups, ranging from the environment to women's rights. This brief assessment focuses on just three issues: debt, health, and education. The dire consequences of unsustainable debt burdens on developing countries continued to be a major campaign objective for the Jubilee movement. But new linkages emerged as these groups added other issues to their long-standing concern with debt: education, and HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. This transition led to the formation of new alliances with organizations fighting against such diseases (notably MSF) and with those promoting universal education (such as Oxfam). Civil-society members of this new alliance stress the point that developing countries need deeper debt relief in order to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic more successfully and to benefit from better educational opportunities.

In a significant convergence of ideas, the Italian Presidency of the G8, a few weeks before the Genoa Summit, released a document entitled *Beyond Debt Relief*, setting forth the elements of an international strategy needed to stimulate growth and eradicate poverty in the poorest of the developing countries. The strategy rests on three pillars: ensuring greater access for poor countries to the markets in industrial countries; facilitating foreign direct investment and technology transfer to the least developed countries; and channelling greater resources to the development of the social sector in the poorest countries in order to enable those countries to reduce the gap in poverty, health and education.[47] The third pillar is particularly relevant to the concerns of civil society. The G8 presidency recognizes that although debt relief already given to countries eligible under the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative presents a significant opportunity for those countries to use more of their own resources to enhance human capital, every country needs a healthy and well-educated population in order to achieve greater social and economic development. The G7 finance ministers, in their report to the leaders, *Debt Relief and Beyond*, revisited these themes. But civil society goals in these areas far exceed G8 declarations and commitments.

Although the Italian government did not set up an NGO centre similar to the one established by the Japanese government in Okinawa in 2000, GSF had several gathering points in the city: an operative centre cum press office on the Via Cesare Battisti; a "convergence point" near the Piazzale Kennedy; a public forum site at the Punta Vagno; and a facility at the Armando Diaz elementary school near the Piazza Tommaseo. The many activities of the GSF included a public forum held 16 to 22 July entitled "Another World Is Possible" as well as street demonstrations. The demonstrations of 20 July were marred by anarchist violence (including instances of anarchists turning against peaceful demonstrators) and a similarly violent police response. The resulting death of Giuliani, the many injuries, and concern for the

safety of their supporters led Drop the Debt and other groups, including the World Development Movement (WDM), to stage a vigil alongside the peaceful demonstrations still held on 21 July.[48]

The "convergence point" was not only a staging area for marches and demonstrations, but also the site for tents for backpacking demonstrators and the venue for various events including a dramatic exhibition (in a large van dubbed "Fly Trap") organized by MSF to highlight the nature, consequences and needed solutions of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other devastating infectious diseases that affect developing countries with special severity. Other centres, too, served multiple functions: temporary lodging for demonstrators, internet and telephone access for NGOs, press conferences, and distribution of campaign literature. It was the school that Italian police stormed during the night of 21 July without a warrant, smashing computers, confiscating computer disks, arresting about 90 people including members of the violent anarchist "Black Bloc" or "Tute Nere" (Black Overalls, to be distinguished from the generally nonviolent "Tute Bianche" or White Overalls), and reportedly beating up protesters (many of whom were asleep) and some journalists.[49] Worse, there were eyewitness accounts of police complicity with the Black Bloc. Susan George tells of Don Vitaliano della Sala, a churchman, who reported seeing Black Bloc members leaving a van of the *carabinieri* (military police), and Arthur Neslen described a film shown after the police raid at the Genoa Social Forum press conference "of muscular men in jeans and face-masks giving orders to 'activists' on motorbikes behind police lines."[50]

The tradition of host-government dialogue with civil society continued before and during the Genoa Summit. In the preparatory phase, the Italian government made a serious effort to communicate with NGOs, especially in the areas of development aid and poverty reduction. Four research institutes were directed to consult NGOs and solicit their recommendations in what was termed the Genoa Nongovernmental Initiative.[51] The mayor of Genoa confirmed his intention, shared with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, "to open a dialogue with the movements that intend to demonstrate ... critically but peacefully during the summit". Italy's Interior Minister Scajola concurred.[52] Media reports added that, according to a statement of the Interior Ministry, "the right of peaceful demonstrations ... would be guaranteed but any form of violence would not be tolerated."[53]

Consultations with Italian and other G8 government leaders and ministers took place on several occasions during the summit. In a news conference on 20 July, Bono, Bob Geldof and Lorenzo Jovanotti, pop music stars and strong supporters of the Jubilee/Drop the Debt campaign, talked of a series of meetings they had had with the British, German, Canadian, European Union and Russian leaders, as well as with George W. Bush's security advisor Condoleezza Rice, but they expressed frustration at the Italian host's refusal to facilitate meetings with leaders from the South. The three rock musicians found the Millennium Action Plan for Africa (later called NEPAD, for New Partnership for African Development) encouraging, and they welcomed the debt-forgiveness commitments of Canada and Italy as particularly

praiseworthy. Nonetheless, they added that even some countries whose debt had been cancelled still had to continue to pay their rich creditors. The artists welcomed the opportunity that such meetings provided for asking the leaders hard questions such as "Is an African life not worth the same as a European life?" and they took advantage of being able to talk directly to the major shareholders of the IMF with the power to do something about debt. These widely popular musicians were articulate spokesmen and powerful symbols of the best aspirations and goals of civil society.[54]

This kind of dialogue is no less important for the leaders of the G8. Equally significant were their outreach meetings with African leaders (the presidents of Algeria, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa), and with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and administrative heads of the FAO, WHO, the World Bank and the WTO. But dialogue, to be meaningful, must not consist of empty words and promises, of which the world has heard too much. A representative of MSF expressed disappointment at what she saw as just that kind of inadequate dialogue at Genoa, in contrast with the more upbeat assessment of Bono, Geldof and Jovanotti.

As at other summits starting with Halifax, NGOs and civil society were reflected in several Genoa G7/G8 documents. The *G7 Statement* of 20 July, in the section concerning the launching of the new Doha round of trade negotiations, states that "[t]he WTO should continue to respond to the legitimate expectations of civil society, and ensure that the new Round supports sustainable development".[55] The final G8 *Communiqué* of 22 July, making several references to NGOs and civil society, undertakes to "promote innovative solutions based on a broad partnership with civil society and the private sector". Under "A Strategic Approach to Poverty Reduction", it promises to help (in unspecified ways) developing countries promote active involvement of civil society and NGOs. On the launching (with the UN) of the global fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, the Co*mmuniqué* states that local partners, "including NGOs and international agencies, will be instrumental in the successful operation of the Fund". In welcoming Russia's proposal to convene a global conference on climate change in 2003, the *Communiqué* emphasizes the participation in the conference of "governments, business and science as well as representatives of civil society". Referring to the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, it commits the G8 to "work in partnership with developing countries for an inclusive preparatory process with civil society on a forward looking and substantial agenda with action-oriented results". On food security, the G8 promises to "support the crucial role international organizations and NGOs play in relief operations" in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, and acknowledges civil society as an important stakeholder in food safety issues in general.[56]

Other official documents related to the Genoa Summit mention NGOs and civil society. The excellent report submitted to the G8 leaders by the Digital Opportunity Task Force (established by the 2000 Okinawa Summit with membership drawn from governments, the private sector and civil society),

and the Italian Presidency document *Beyond Debt Relief*, include a number of such references.[57] So do the *Conclusions* of the pre-summit meeting of the G8 foreign ministers (Rome, 18-19 July), and the report *Strengthening the International Financial System and the Multilateral Development Banks* issued by the pre-summit meeting of the G7 finance ministers (Rome, 7 July). The last-mentioned report addresses the issue of the reform of multilateral development banks (MDBs), and remark that they had "held informal consultations with the other MDB shareholders and NGOs/civil society in order to explain the objectives and the contents of the reform effort".[58]

Civil society evaluation of the Genoa Summit

Civil society's verdict on the Genoa Summit was rather negative. The Jubilee movement expressed disappointment at "the failure of the richest nations to once again tackle the global debt crisis that is worsening the impoverishment of over 2 billion people in severely indebted countries". Jubilee acknowledged that the number of countries eligible for debt relief under the HIPC initiative had increased from 9 to 23 between the Okinawa and Genoa summits, but criticized the G7 for congratulating itself on progress when "most of these countries [were] approaching unsustainable levels of debt again".[59] Jubilee disputed the G7 claim of $53 billion in debt relief, contrasting this with the World Bank's June 2001 figure of $34 billion. Calculating the market value instead the nominal value of the debt, Marco Zupi arrived at an even lower figure of $21 billion.[60]

MSF criticized the global health fund, noting that pledges of $1.2 billion were "nowhere near what is required …, [they] are shamefully low. Governments call upon multinationals and the private sector to contribute. Among these are the pharmaceutical companies whose pricing policies are a fundamental part of the problem." MSF asserted that the health fund contained "no clear statement regarding who makes the decisions, on what the funds are to be spent, and no policy to ensure that the fund will be used to purchase medicines at the lowest possible cost". What is needed is "a flexible interpretation of the WTO agreements on intellectual property; promotion of the production and use of generic medicines; a tiered pricing system to ensure that medicines in developing countries are affordable; [and] public investment in research and development for neglected diseases".[61] The initial health fund pledges fell far short of the annual funding of 8 to 10 billion dollars Kofi Annan asked for, and it was unclear how much of the 1.2 billion was actually new money. And yet, the initiative itself and the fact that this is now of concern both to the UN and to the G8 are important, as Sir Nicholas Bayne observes, with the proviso that "[t]he main weakness in the G8 position is that their pledges look like one-time contributions, without any assurance of continuity of funding".[62]

Oxfam was equally critical of the Genoa Summit's record on debt and the health fund but had a slightly more positive reaction on education. It stated: "The G8 did nothing meaningful on debt relief, and

announced a global AIDS fund that still needs much more resources and does nothing about the cost of drugs in poor countries. It's unacceptable that these promises remain unmet. But the leaders laid groundwork for an ambitious agenda next year on Africa and education. The G8 agreed to work with poor countries on a detailed plan to get every child in every poor country into school, the kind of initiative that, if fulfilled, would restore a sense of legitimacy and purpose to these summits. Education breaks the cycle of poverty, and is essential in building democracy and fighting AIDS. Last year the G8 promised a global plan for education. In Genoa they said how to accomplish it. By this time next year, we'll know if they will pay their share. The world can't afford another unmet promise."[63]

On energy, a joint statement issued on 22 July by WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature, formerly World Wildlife Fund), Greenpeace and ECA (Export Credit Agencies) Watch condemned the G8 leaders for refusing to adopt the action plan proposed by the Renewable Energy Task Force that the G8 itself had set up in Okinawa a year earlier. The statement added: "By rejecting its own findings, the G8 are actively denying people in the developing world access to clean reliable energy."[64]

WDM, assessing the Genoa G8 final communiqué of 22 July, commented on the wide gap "that remains between the leaders and the rest of us". It gave an almost point-by-point response to the language of the G8, welcoming certain initiatives but giving the G8 a poor mark overall. Jessica Woodroffe, head of policy at the WDM, said: "Ultimately these summits must be judged by the benefits they deliver to the world's poor. The result this year has been an anti-poor trade plan, nothing on debt and a feeble [global health] fund."[65]

A significant concern was expressed by Drop the Debt about the shifting priorities of the G8: "This year the G8's big idea is to fight disease in the poorest countries. But most people are sick to death of G8 initiatives that never quite get delivered. In 1999, it was debt. Last year [in 2000], it was computers. This year it is health. Next year, we know it will be education. Every unfinished initiative is another blow to the credibility of the G8. They were half way there with debt–this summit is on its way to being a tragic missed opportunity."[66] The G8 would do well to reflect on this perception of shifting attention to and away from crucial issues and policy initiatives. Civil society, for its part, could temper its criticism by recognising that the G7/G8 has been able to deal with several issues simultaneously and has at times achieved results by an iterative process, a case in point being the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations—it took several years of G7 deliberation to achieve success.[67] There may thus be some hope for an increase of G8 commitment followed by real, even if not immediate, release of more substantial funding to combat the scourge of AIDS and other infectious diseases. But civil society must (and undoubtedly will) continue to exert pressure to bring this about.

From Genoa to Kananaskis

In the wake of the turbulent Genoa G8 Summit, many questions have been raised about the future of the G8 and the way its business is conducted, as well as about civil society and other protester groups and their *modus operandi*. For many years, the G7/G8 leaders have voiced their wish to stage smaller, more intimate and more focused meetings, with fewer officials in attendance and perhaps fewer media personnel around. A notable advance was made at the 1998 Birmingham Summit when leaders met without their foreign and finance ministers–this practice has thereafter become established. But there continued to be much dissatisfaction with the G7/G8. The *Financial Times*, in a post-Genoa leader, questions whether "G8 summits should exist and, if so, in what form"; notes that "summits have worked best when the leaders have had a chance to be separate from their national entourages ... and when there has been a crisis to try to sort out"; and concludes that there "should have been ... a commitment to hold the next G8 only when there is a burning topic to discuss."[68] But leaders are unlikely to want such a radical change–the newly simplified, streamlined format and the continuing advantages of these highest-level face-to-face annual meetings are too attractive.

After September 11, re-examination of the future of the G7/G8-civil society nexus is in order. John Kirton writes that in the post-September 11 era "[f]inding better and more innovative ways to connect with civil society, at the summit itself, and ... through the media, throughout the G8, and around the world, has become a critical and compelling task." To aid that task, he offers a ten-point programme for the Canadian host government in the preparation and conduct of the Kananaskis Summit. Among his recommendations are: better public information about the G7/G8 (this would include an important role for parliamentarians); the establishment of government-supported G8 study centres; sponsorship of G8 scholarships (perhaps through the G8 education ministers); better work with the news media; drafting the communiqué in clearer, more accessible language; and bringing civil society closer to the summit through such means as establishing a multi-stakeholder civil society forum, building on the patterns of the Okinawa G8 Summit and the Québec City Summit of the Americas.[69]

The Kananaskis Summit of 26-27 June 2002 and Surrounding Events

In the lead-up to Kananaskis, the Canadian host government took a number of steps to further dialogue with civil society. Under the leadership of sherpa Robert Fowler, a series of extensive consultations with citizen groups was conducted. In addition, the government made good efforts to educate the public at all levels about the G7/G8 and its role. The government also launched an impressive website dedicated to the Summit (www.g8.gc.ca), and provided generous funding for the G6B ("Group of 6 Billion") People's Summit, held at the University of Calgary. It is an open question whether these efforts matched the British government's fruitful consultations with civil society at the time of the Birmingham Summit; the

in-depth discussions (involving think tanks as well as a number of civil society groups) conducted by the Italian government prior to the Genoa Summit; or the kind of support provided by the Japanese government for the Okinawa Summit.

The record of civil society activism shows that while government initiatives toward nonstate actors is important, civil society does not take its clues from government but develops strategies on its own terms. There were numerous NGO meetings in preparation for Kananaskis. Online activism was evident, attested to by several websites, such as those of G8 Activism (http://g8.activist.ca) and Partnership Africa Canada (http://partnershipafricacanada.org). Established websites of major international NGOs and coalitions also picked up coverage of G8-related campaigns and other activities.

Street demonstrations were largely peaceful, with an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 demonstrators in Calgary (and a much smaller number near Kananaskis). The pre-summit meeting of G8 foreign ministers in Whistler, British Columbia, had also passed without incident, unlike the pre-summit G7 finance ministers meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where 30 demonstrators were arrested. Unlike Genoa or Quebec City, there were no injuries. In a lecture after the end of the Kananaskis Summit, John Kirton evaluated the Summit's contribution to civil society. He argued that "Kananaskis was a predictably peaceful Summit, but one where G8 governments' fears of violence led them to engage civil society less meaningfully that they could have–and should have–to realize their common goals." He cites various factors contributing to "civility" around and at this summit: the small number of protesters, the non-threatening tactics of Canadian security forces deployed at Kananaskis and Calgary (in sharp contrast with the behaviour of elements of Italian security forces in Genoa), the educational effort of the Canadian government in the lead-up to the Summit, and the central Summit theme of poverty reduction in Africa whose goals were largely shared by G8 leaders and civil society.[70] One must add another, equally important factor: civil society's own efforts, referred to earlier, to distance itself from violent, disruptive elements and to monitor demonstrations to make sure that they remained peaceful.

A "Solidarity Village" had been planned by some segments of civil society (especially the following CSOs: Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada; Alberta Federation of Labour; Co-Motion Collective; Council of Canadians; Edmonton G8 Planning Collective; Alberta Council for Global Cooperation; and Calgary District Labour Council), as a camp for activists during the week of the Summit. It was to be located in the foothills of the Rockies near Kananaskis Village as a space from which to address and criticize the G8 agenda. In the event, this initiative was banned by G8 Summit officials and denied another venue in Calgary by the city's mayor.[71]

The three main themes of the Kananaskis Summit (Africa, the economy, and terrorism) lent themselves to meaningful civil society participation. Amnesty International (AI) expressed the conviction that in all three Summit issues the discussion and outcome should be infused with human rights concerns

and perspectives. The global economy should be strengthened in a manner that is centred on human rights. The fight against terrorism raises human rights concerns. And human rights should be a crucial aspect of NEPAD and the G8 Africa Action Plan.[72]

NGOs and civil society reflected in G7/G8 documents

For the first time in G7/G8 summit history, Kananaskis produced no communiqué but only a brief, more informal *Chair's Summary*.[73] This was a result of long-standing aversion by some G8 leaders to lengthy, pre-scripted communiqués that, according to some, more people wrote than read. (There had been chair's summaries at earlier summits but those were issued in addition to formal communiqués.) The Kananaskis *Chair's Summary* makes no direct mention of NGOs or civil society.

The *Statement by G7 Leaders* concentrates on the achievements and shortcomings of the HIPC initiative.[74] It makes no reference to civil society, even though the Jubilee movement and other CSOs have been instrumental in keeping the debt issue front and centre, and are continuing their thrust for greater and more meaningful debt relief than has hitherto been achieved.

The *Africa Action Plan*, the G8's response to NEPAD, includes several explicit references to civil society; other aspects of the Plan imply civil society involvement.[75] The G8 leaders "encourage South-South cooperation and collaboration with international institutions and civil society, including the business sector, in support of the NEPAD (para. 10). Under the heading "Promoting Peace and Security", the leaders commit to "[w]orking with African governments, civil society and others to address the linkage between armed conflict and the exploitation of natural resources" (point 1.5); and under "Strengthening Institutions and Governance" the leaders record a further commitment to support "African efforts to involve parliamentarians and civil society in all aspects of the NEPAD process" (point 2.1).

The G8 document entitled *A New Focus on Education for All*, incorporating the report of the G8 Education Task Force, recognizes that all stakeholders, including local communities, private providers and NGOs should be "seriously engaged in the development and implementation of education plans". In calling for a more coherent international process in the "education for all" project, the report recalls Unesco's role in bringing together on a regular basis education ministers as well as various institutions, NGOs and representatives of developing countries, so that the political momentum may be maintained. And, to give another example of recognition of civil society's role on the ministerial level, the *Chair's Summary* of the post-Kananaskis G8 Development Ministers' Meeting points to the need for greater engagement of civil society in development strategies, especially as regards Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) for developing countries.[76]

Civil society evaluation of the Kananaskis Summit and associated events

Many CSOs were represented in Calgary by North American (Canadian and US) affiliates rather than people from international headquarters. This can be attributed to various causes but the cautious (perhaps over-cautious) approach of immigration and police authorities post-September 11 was one major factor. AI, for one, expressed its disappointment at the refusal of Canadian authorities to grant accreditation to its observer of the policing at the G8 summit on the grounds that he did not have "the background and knowledge of the law required to make balanced and objective observations".[77] AI disputed this claim and was nonetheless ably represented in Calgary by Amnesty Canada.

Although AI welcomed the G8 leaders' support of efforts by African countries and the UN to regulate activities of arms traffickers and eliminate the flow of illicit weapons to and within Africa, it accused the Africa Action Plan of failure to recognize the responsibility of the G8 governments themselves for the sale and transfer of arms to African countries. AI called for concrete commitments, not just inspirational sentiments. It wanted the G8 states not to approach Africa as a philanthropic concern but to take responsibility for arms trade implications: up to 80% of small-arms trade originates in G8 states, the US and Russia being the major sources.

On "conflict diamonds" and other "conflict commodities", AI acknowledged the G8's support of voluntary measures (notably the Kimberley process) but demanded more: that corporate social responsibility be based on human rights standards and be binding by regulation or legislation. And on policing and law enforcement, AI asked G8 to help make police defenders of human rights, involving effective mechanisms to ensure police operational accountability, with laws governing police and law enforcement officials consistent with international human rights standards.[78]

For Greenpeace, the overarching goal for the Kananaskis Summit and related ministerial meetings was to keep the issue of renewable energy and development in focus and to garner support for an initiative on this issue in preparation for the Johannesburg Summit. Greenpeace had not expected to see an agreement on renewables from any part of the G8 system, but considered its campaign more successful at the G8 environment ministers' meeting than at the Kananaskis Summit itself. In addition, Greenpeace wanted to use the forum provided by the pre-Kananaskis G8 series of meetings to raise issues of climate change and Kyoto, especially in order to put pressure on Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to announce a Canadian ratification decision either in Kananaskis or in Johannesburg. Greenpeace considers itself to have been very successful on climate change/Kyoto in the G8 environment and energy ministers meetings, not successful at all at the Kananaskis Summit and again very successful in Johannesburg. Other Greenpeace activities involved stationing a Solar Truck in Calgary, installing solar panels on Alberta Premier Ralph Klein's roof just before the environment ministers' meeting, and arranging for senior-level European politicians to speak to Canadian media immediately before the start of that

ministerial meeting in order to create a public and political dynamic that forced, in Greenpeace's view, a discussion on climate change, Canada's position on Kyoto and support for renewable energy at the meeting.

In its organizational objective to build capacity to communicate with the larger anti-corporate globalization movement and to engage the movement's interest through the Johannesburg summit, Greenpeace considers itself to have been moderately successful. One measure of this success was a multilingual G8 Web Audio project that attracted more than 1.5 million page hits during a single month. Visitors to this website stayed longer and visited more pages than usual. Greenpeace also placed its audio, video and printed material with a whole range of alternative media, groups, listservs and individuals.

Greenpeace presented its position throughout the G8 series of meetings leading up to Kananaskis at the national level in all G8 countries. Presentations were made in person, by correspondence and through the media. Once the summit started, given its highly choreographed nature, the only possible civil society role in the perception of Greenpeace was commentary and bearing witness. It turned out, not unexpectedly, that interest of mainstream media was at best tangential to Greenpeace messages.[79]

The Jubilee movement welcomed "the admission by the G8 countries that the levels of debt cancellation committed at Decision Point will not be sufficient to bring HIPC debt down to sustainable levels" but stated its belief that the additional $1 billion debt cancellation offered at Kananaskis would "fall far short of the levels needed if the HIPC countries are to meet the Millennium Development Goals". It further commented that the G8 proposal did not provide for any further debt relief for countries already beyond Completion Point.[80]

MSF, in a press release dated 25 June 2002, admonished the G8 leaders to move from rhetoric to action in order to ensure access to effective and affordable treatments for infectious diseases in the developing world, and to "transform political commitment into hard cash". Although the UN has called for US$10 billion for AIDS alone in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the G8 had thus far only allocated US$580 million–a shortfall of almost 96%. Political will and sufficient resources are needed to combat these diseases. MSF also calls on the G8 to support exceptions to patent rights to allow export of medicines produced under a compulsory licence, and to support research and development for effective and affordable treatments for neglected diseases affecting millions in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world.[81]

At the close of the Kananaskis Summit, Oxfam acknowledged that the G8's Africa Action Plan contained a framework (and singled out Canada and the UK for their leadership), but cautioned that the plan contained too few concrete actions and provided for too little money. For six months before the summit, Oxfam had lobbied G8 governments (particularly the US, Britain, Germany and Canada) in the context of NEPAD and the Africa Action Plan, for a substantial aid increase, for fair trade and secure

market access, and for resolution of the conflicts plaguing that continent. After Kananaskis, Oxfam welcomed: the fact that the Action Plan acknowledged the breadth of issues concerning Africa's needs; the additional aid pledged (though conditionally) following the Monterrey UN Conference on Financing for Development; G8 endorsement of the education task force report and the resulting Education for All Action Plan; the commitment of $1 billion to cover unsustainable debt burdens of countries suffering from a steep fall of commodity prices; support for African efforts to resolve conflicts and post-conflict problems throughout the continent; commitment to eradicate polio in Africa by 2002; and acknowledgment of the need for better and fuller consultation with African civil society in implementing NEPAD. Oxfam then pointed out the need for G8 countries to implement the pledge to increase aid to Africa, to fund the Education for All Action Plan immediately, to increase funding for the Global Health Fund, to increase debt relief, to promote fair trade, to work for an international arms trade treaty, to implement fully the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, and to prevent companies under their jurisdiction from illegal or unethical exploitation of natural resources.[82]

The reaction of African NGOs to NEPAD is particularly significant. There is considerable opposition to a plan that many in African CSOs see as lacking in civil society involvement, as well as other limitations. The 50 Years Is Enough network asserts that "[b]oth NEPAD and the [G8] action plan on Africa were devised in a vacuum, with no input from civil society organizations. Scores of prominent African civil society and academic networks have criticized NEPAD for its faithfulness to status quo 'neo-liberal' economic policies and for its claim to 'African ownership' in the absence of consultation beyond the inner circles of the presidents of South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, and Algeria."[83] Other segments of African civil society acknowledged that the G8, by consulting with African CSOs, has shown greater openness, and African civil society chose to engage the G8 in a reciprocal manner. Yet, the G8 Africa Action Plan caused "hurt surprise"among African CSOs because the financial commitments were far lower than expected.[84] But the G8 cannot ignore this major initiative, however imperfect, coming from Africa and must, instead, work for improvements, including bringing African civil society on board.[85]

G8 Dialogue with Civil Society

Before Kananaskis, there were two critical points of civil society contact with the Canadian host government. First, the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, whose hearings allowed ample CSO representation, produced a useful and interesting report.[86] The report included 20 recommendations on assistance to poor countries, financial reform, debt relief, human rights, African issues, aid, health and education, international trade and investment, sustainable development, terrorism, accountability, and G8 reform. Recommendation 14, in particular,

calls for a true partnership with civil society in the Africa Action Plan. It was submitted to the government but, at the time of this writing, has not yet elicited an official response.

Second, civil society was well represented in the series of useful consultation meetings across Canada, organized by Canadian sherpa Robert Fowler. CIDA, too, organized meetings on Africa in the lead-up to Kananaskis. But dialogue with other G8 governments was difficult, in contrast with the Québec City Summit of the Americas where there had been wider-ranging civil society consultations with a number of governments. (Discussing the Summit of the Americas, Marc Lortie and Sylvie Bédard argue that the complexity of our globalized world has made the input of diverse actors–government, business, civil society and others–necessary because each actor brings a different expertise and perspective to decision-making. They conclude that a concerted, integrated approach on the part of government leads to increased understanding and cooperation among different sectors of society, resulting in an expanded social consensus.)[87]

Moderate NGOs would welcome the opportunity to meet with senior members of other governments in an open process.[88] Nevertheless, other CSOs, such as Oxfam and Greenpeace, were able to establish dialogue with several or all G8 countries in the lead-up to Kananaskis. An interesting high-level dialogue, under the aegis of the Montreal International Forum/Forum international de Montréal, took place on 21-23 May 2002 in Montreal and Ottawa; it brought together civil society representatives from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Senegal, UK, Uruguay, US and Zimbabwe with representatives of the governments of Canada, France, Japan and the UK. The three topics of discussion were: the global democratic deficit and civil society engagement; the NEPAD consultative process; and future G8-civil society dialogue building on multi-stakeholder experiences. During this meeting the French representative expressed interest in consultations with civil society in the lead-up to the 2003 Evian Summit. To this end, the Montreal International Forum will co-ordinate preparations with members of French civil society.[89]

The G6B People's Summit

AI considered the G6B People's Summit in Calgary a success for the civil society movement. 1,400 people attended, more than had been expected. There were excellent presentations, and all sessions were packed. But the only connection with the official G8 Summit occurred during the open session on the final day of the G6B, with Foreign Minister Bill Graham and International Co-operation Minister Susan Whelan present. Bill Graham accepted the G6B's recommendations and later transmitted them to the Summit host, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

In an evaluation of this event, prominent summit-watcher and former summit participant Nicholas Bayne noted a generally negative attitude to the G8, with much strident criticism, especially on Africa. He

added, however, that influential international NGOs such as Oxfam and MSF offered critical but more constructive comment. Interestingly, the proceedings of G6B influenced the media very much, due to the fact that the G8 leaders themselves were not very accessible.[90]

The role of information and communications technology

Information and communications technology (ICT) has played a crucial role in transforming and empowering civil society. It increased the scope and the speed of CSO activity tremendously. For many NGOs, ICT is the tool of choice; they have been able to use technology strategically in fundraising, research, advocacy, service delivery, and networking cheaply, efficiently and in a flexible manner. These technologies extend beyond the internet to include videoconferencing, e-mail, fax machines, mobile telephones, satellite hookups and other advances.

In addition to making it possible to collect and circulate data both internally and to the public, ICT has facilitated the co-ordination of action and the mobilization and delivery of organizational support to activists.[91] It has helped NGOs to improve their decision-making processes and contributed to the emergence of local networks of expertise. By using ICT in their campaigns, CSOs have been able to reduce the cost of coalition-building and of communication. ICT is an increasingly integral aspect of the functioning and effectiveness of civil society in international decision-making.[92]

CSOs have used information technologies in new and creative ways to influence the making of foreign policy. The rapid development of ICT and the fact that the state no longer has a monopoly on information have contributed to the transformation of NGOs into important actors able to influence international politics in issue areas that used to be the exclusive domain of states. The campaigns for the Landmine Ban Treaty and for the International Criminal Court bear this out. The Jubilee campaign for debt relief, including G7-related activities, has also used ICT extensively and in a sophisticated manner.

ICT, however, is not always the preferred civil society tool of operation; face-to-face and other traditional communication, or massive street demonstrations, can produce better results in certain situations. Face-to-face meetings are at times easier for sharing ideas and strategies, and for developing mutual trust. Printed publications will remain necessary components of campaigning. Many NGOs of the South suffer from the digital gap or lack access to ICT altogether.[93]

As well, technology can be used against civil society, or misused in various ways; an interesting example is the false WTO website probably propagated by a segment of "uncivil society". Any kind of technology, not just ICT, can be misused; the September 11 terrorist attacks show that apparently benign technologies can be used by criminal and terrorist organizations for their own ends.[94]

And finally, while information is a most important power resource, it must be transformed into shared knowledge to realize its potential to generate power. This transformation must involve more effective use of ICT both by civil society and its IGO interlocutors.[95]

Conclusions

Several lessons can be drawn from this analysis of UN-civil society and G7/G8-civil society interaction. First, civil society is an increasingly important and powerful actor locally, regionally, nationally and globally. It is an essential part of today's multi-stakeholder policy environment, including CSO relations with the UN and the G7/G8 system. At its best, civil society gives voice to the plight and aspirations of those marginalized or left behind by globalization, and it fights for the universal extension of the benefits of globalization.

Second, distinguishing various segments of protesters is not merely an academic or journalistic exercise. Serious civil-society organizations realize that in order to pursue their goals and protect their members and supporters they must isolate and prevent violent groups from sabotaging democratic rights, peaceful demonstrations and legitimate programmes. Responsible civil-society groups have found ways to police the demonstrations in which they participate, in order to prevent destructive elements from infiltrating and hijacking peaceful protest. Such self-examination is underway and is being increasingly implemented. This has become particularly important after September 11, and CSOs have been taking an active part to ensure peaceful protest. In Calgary, there was a team of some 40 civil society monitors out in the streets, and this successful monitoring was part of the overall peaceful nature of civil society participation in the 2002 summit-related events.

Third, a crucial factor in the growing influence of civil society has been information technology. Civil society has learned fast and has used this relatively inexpensive and powerful tool purposefully and efficiently. As well, civil society has developed and employed impressive expertise in using the mass media to disseminate its message and exert its influence.

Fourth, in UN-civil society relations, recent advances in informal arrangements are perhaps more significant than the old, limited formal consultative relations that have become rather sterile. If UN member governments are unwilling to accommodate broader and more intensive civil society participation by reforming long-standing formal arrangements, civil society has shown itself capable of flexibility and experimentation in order to enhance its role and influence in UN fora and programmes.

Fifth, unlike the regular, often formal arrangements with civil society found in the UN system, the OECD, and other structured, traditional IGOs, civil-society relations with the G7/G8–a flexible institution by and large unhampered by bureaucratic machinery–are characterized by informal practice. There is

increasing mutual recognition of the desirability of dialogue and partnership among these actors, along with the inevitable tensions resulting from differing and sometimes conflicting perceptions, objectives and tactics. How can the G7/G8 bring major, responsible NGOs and civil-society coalitions into some sort of association? Creative new ways of meeting this challenge have been proposed and are being seriously considered.

Civil society's dialogue with the G8, well established at Birmingham and evolved through Cologne, Okinawa, Genoa and Kananaskis, is set to continue. French authorities, hosts of the 2003 Evian Summit, have already indicated their intention to engage in dialogue with CSOs. It has been demonstrated that the G7/G8 could work with responsible, constructive civil-society groups in partnership rather than confronting those groups as adversaries (although constructive, peaceful confrontation is sometimes necessary). The challenge is to muster the political will and then to find ways to develop such partnerships in a meaningful and mutually beneficial manner.

Sixth, in the wake of the turbulent Genoa G8 Summit, many questions have been raised about the future of the G8 and the way its business is conducted, as well as about civil society and other protester groups and their methods of operation. For many years, the G7/G8 leaders have voiced their wish to stage smaller, more intimate and more focused meetings, with fewer officials in attendance and perhaps fewer media personnel around. This process, begun at the 1998 Birmingham Summit when leaders first met without their foreign and finance ministers, has lead to the 2002 Summit in remote Kananaskis where leaders came closer than ever to their preferred format.

Finally, results of civil society activity–whether positive as exemplified by bringing about the Landmine Ban Treaty or negative as in defeating the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)–cannot be achieved by NGOs and civil society groups alone or even by any combination of these actors.[96] The injustices of indebtedness of the poorest countries, environmental degradation, lack of access to affordable essential medicines to fight against devastating diseases, educational deficits–these are some of the major concerns of civil society, and it is civil society that plays a crucial role in campaigning for solutions, mobilizing people for support of these causes, and lobbying the most powerful governments and international institutions. But, in the end, it is governments that had to sign and ratify the landmine treaty or the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court; and it is the pharmaceutical companies that must lower the price of antiretrovirals and other essential medicines in the poorest countries. Governments and IGOs may not have the political will or may be paralyzed by inertia; business corporations are often motivated solely by profit rather than profit accompanied by social responsibility. Governments and corporations often cannot or will not move without the impetus of civil society. Michael Edwards observes that "[a]lthough non-governmental actors cannot replace the functions of elected governments, they do provide ideas, information, pressure for results, and the leverage required to

implement solutions on the ground–all of which are necessary to solve global problems. ... Acting alone, governments cannot confer legitimacy on global decisions ... [;] further engagement with ... non-state actors is inevitable."[97] And Kamal Malhotra asserts that "civil society's main role is in holding both the state and the market accountable, to be ... a societal watchdog [vis-à-vis both the state and the market]" but cautions that civil society cannot be a substitute for the state.[98]

Public goods can be produced by partnership, by patient advocacy, or sometimes by confrontation–which can be, but is not always, counterproductive. Whether by willing co-operation or by intentional or unintended complementarity, civil society, government and business need one another to achieve social, economic and political goals. Synergy can and does occur, whether there are formal structures of interaction, well-functioning practical arrangements, or convergences of views and programmes among state and non-state actors. In this context, the "new diplomacy" that has seen NGOs and civil society coalitions working with governments and IGOs is a significant development. Non-state actors–NGOs, business groups, nongovernmental funding agencies and others–familiar with the situation on the ground, can tap into grassroots movements and can achieve better results than governmental entities, working alone, could. At its best, civil society works in partnership with IGOs and governments for the benefit of the greatest number of people; at its worst, it acts to undermine IGOs and governments; and there are many shades of interaction along this continuum.

But governments, IGOs and the business sector cannot take it for granted that civil society will act on their terms. On 7 December 2001, in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the Nobel prize, 100 laureates warned in their statement that "[t]he most profound danger to world peace in the coming years will stem not from the irrational acts of states or individuals but from the legitimate demands of the world's dispossessed. ... It cannot be expected ... that in all cases they will be content to await the beneficence of the rich."[99] The international community must find ways to address such legitimate demands and to remedy inequalities. Responsible civil society groups will continue to give voice to the plight and aspirations of the marginalized, and will continue to push for those goals.

The UN and other IGOs, G8 governments and civil society share the responsibility to ensure that their interaction is meaningful and productive. Meeting this difficult challenge will be a true test of the viability of both IGOs and responsible civil-society movements.

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