

TUAC	trade union advisory committee to the
OECD	organisation for economic cooperation and development
■ CSC	commission syndicale consultative auprès de
OCDE	l'organisation de coopération et de développement économiques

**TUAC EVALUATION
OF THE OUTCOME OF THE G8 ST PETERSBURG SUMMIT
July 2006**

Overview

1. In their annual Summit, leaders of the G8 countries met in St. Petersburg from 15-17 July 2006 to discuss, collective approaches to key international issues. Global policy approaches to energy security, the fight against infectious diseases and education were uppermost on the agenda. Trade and the WTO negotiations, combating Intellectual Property Rights piracy and counterfeiting, fighting terrorism and high level corruption as well as the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, were focused on in a dozen statements and reports. The summit though was effectively hijacked by the events in the Middle East. In reaction to the upsurge of violence in the region, G8 leaders also adopted a statement, calling for a cessation of violence in the Middle East and advocating political and diplomatic methods to achieve a settlement. The potential role of the United Nations remained opaque in view of differences of opinion among G8 members who offered no clear signal to the combatants.

2. In terms of worldwide economics, G8 leaders stuck to previous observations from the international economic institutions such as the IMF and the OECD. They concluded that, despite existing risks brought about by high and volatile energy prices, global imbalances and growing protectionism, the world's growth remains strong and has become more broadly based. At the trade union leaders' meeting with President Putin held on July 6, prior to the summit, the trade unions called for the issues of creating decent work, workers rights and the delivery of past commitments to be included as three transversal issues under each of the agenda items at the summit. President Putin gave a high-profile response and the G8 web-site published the trade union statement together with his commitment "to submit all of their proposals to the presidents and prime ministers at the forthcoming summit in St. Petersburg". Regrettably, however the reports and statements adopted do not address the social dimension of globalization nor the problems and pressures it puts on the work place. They neither address unemployment in a straightforward manner nor the creation of jobs of acceptable quality – decent work – nor the promotion of rights at work. A link to the world of work exists in the document on *Education for Innovative Societies in the 21st century* where the G8 leaders say that "Our governments will promote dialogue and synergies with business, higher education and labour to develop sound higher education and human resource policies" (paragraph 9). The issue is how this dialogue is to be implemented in a G8 framework.

3. The summit also adopted an update on Africa setting out the G8 commitments. These mainly are a response to trade union and civil society pressure on the G8 to deliver on Gleneagles commitments. There is also progress on reporting on the treatment of AIDS and other infectious diseases. For many of the issues however this amounts to ongoing work. On trade the statement calls for an agreement to be reached on WTO negotiations on agriculture and industrial tariffs "within a month". A separate statement of potential importance was also adopted on "Fighting High-Level Corruption".

Education for Innovative Societies in the 21st century

4. The statement adopted on Education seeks to balance both the social and economic objectives on education and science policy, underlining the need to promote modern and effective education systems to meet the challenges of a global knowledge-based economy. It also recognizes that “education, the enhancement of skills, and the generation of new ideas are essential to the development of human capital and are key engines of economic growth, drivers of market productivity, and sources of cohesion for all nations.”

5. Reaffirming the importance of the *G-8 Cologne Summit Charter on Aims and Ambitions for Lifelong Learning* (adopted 1999) and its call for opportunities and incentives for lifelong learning to be created for all, the G8 leaders pledged to provide stronger opportunities for our young people and for future generations as well as to promote more effective use of public resources in education at all levels and at all stages of life; to enable individuals to adapt to change, maximize their skills and knowledge, to contribute to their communities and work places and to strengthen linkages between learning, enterprise training and the labour market; to place a high policy priority on the importance of early childhood education to give young children a strong start and to strengthen social equity; to facilitate social and economic integration of immigrants into host countries and societies, with education being one of the effective means of doing so; to encourage the development of education policies aimed at fostering a system of accessible, diverse, sustainable, and high-quality higher education institutions, both university and non-university, including research institutions, community colleges, technical schools, public and private sector vocational training institutes, with the ability to respond to new demands; to collaborate on creating research networks among higher education institutions, research centers and business, and capitalize on the leading edge technology they produce. They state that they will share best practices on knowledge-based cluster development and public-private partnerships to facilitate global knowledge dissemination and move technologies quickly from the laboratory to the marketplace; to increase exchanges in science and technology and other fields at all levels of education, and promote better understanding of foreign qualifications and educational outcomes and to promote investment in knowledge, research and development, particularly by leveraging public expenditures strategically to attract private funding in R&D, including in the education sector. In line with that it was also agreed to encourage closer cooperation between universities and industry.

6. G8 leaders also acknowledged that the presence of highly qualified teachers in every classroom is fundamental to improving student learning and achievement. Thus, they agreed systems to make teaching an attractive career choice, to develop teachers' knowledge and skills, and to retain effective teachers in schools.

7. Finally, it was also agreed to cooperate with multilateral aid agencies, developing countries and other stakeholders to achieve high quality basic education, literacy and gender equality in accord with the education-related Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of *Education for All* programme in order to contribute to sustainable development and building democratic societies.

8. A proposal by Russia to establish an expert group which could include representatives of state organizations, business and civil society, is noted in the Chair's conclusions although not in the main document. The purpose is to develop criteria and procedures for evaluating educational outcomes and the certification of qualifications – going in the direction of a G8

“Bologna process”. Establishing such a group, however, and ensuring trade union participation, is certainly one of the issues that must be on the agenda of the labour follow up to the St. Petersburg G8 summit that is due to be held in Moscow on 9-10 October. The same applies even more to policies promoting lifelong learning where the ongoing work must take into account new and innovative approaches developed by trade unions and employers to promote skills and competencies nor the active role performed by social partners in order to efficiently implement and monitor training policies.

Global Energy Security

9. The statement on energy security represents the culmination of six months of negotiation between Russia, with control over major supplies of a central strategic resource, and most other G8 countries, concerned over security of supply and restrictions on access by other G8 companies to the Russian energy market. The outcome probably raises the standing of President Putin with Russian public opinion for defending a strategic resource. More constructively it should be used as a framework for continuing dialogue with Russia over energy supplies. Uppermost amid concerns remains the lack of seriousness by the US in taking energy efficiency seriously plus the booming Chinese demand for energy. These twin concerns are not compatible with combating climate change and ensuring sustainable development.

10. The energy statement does have elements of direct importance to trade unions notably the extensive references, sometimes ambiguous, to engagement with “stakeholders”. More directly the statement does raise the issue of skills in the energy sector, stating that: “Ensuring the long-term availability of skilled workforce throughout the energy sector is critical to energy security. We encourage institutions of higher learning and the private sector to take the necessary steps in providing training to adequately develop human resources in the energy sector, including new and innovative energy resources and technologies needed for ensuring longer- term energy security.” As usual the issue is how to ensure follow up.

Fight against infectious diseases

11. The G8 has renewed its commitment to tackle HIV/AIDS, along with tuberculosis and malaria, and to create a regular review of its work, reflecting a year-long lobby by trade unions that called on Summit leaders for a reporting framework to monitor progress on the disease. However, the question remains as to how and by whom this would be accomplished.

12. The G8 Summit agreed to set up tangible steps for the surveillance of infectious diseases, through timely reporting and sharing of data. In addition, it vowed to help developing countries improve the capacity of national surveillance and monitoring systems by providing technical assistance and training of experts and improving cooperation. The Summit also pledged its “continued support” to UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). It is essential that the G8 governments to now place this agency and its co-sponsors at the centre of their monitoring and reporting machinery. Fulfilling promises is more productive than making new ones given last year’s unaccomplished G8 promise to get on, track for universal access to treatment by 2010.

13. The trade union statement to the G8 argued that setting concrete workplace, community and national targets that relate to the G8 concerns are the only way to ensure real success. However, there must be tracking and reporting process. With the assistance of UNAIDS, trade

unions have developed our own country-by-country profiles for HIV/AIDS, which take account of TB and malaria. These have allowed us to develop our own tracking and reporting processes. However this and other types of information need to be properly channelled through an identified G8 focal point. The issue will therefore return at the G8 summit in Germany in 2007.

Fighting high level corruption

14. The commitment to support the global ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is welcome. However, five G8 countries have so far failed to ratify the convention. It is therefore essential that now Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and the USA proceed urgently with ratification. The commitment to work towards effective implementation of UNCAC is also welcome. Trade unions would call on the first Conference of the Parties, meeting in Jordan in December 2006, to agree the creation of an effective monitoring mechanism, involving consultation with trade unions, business and civil society, and ensuring that there are sufficient resources in place to support UNCAC implementation in developing countries.

15. The statement's continued commitment to the implementation of the OECD Anti-bribery Convention and to evaluation based on effective peer review is to be welcomed. However, trade unions would stress the importance of ensuring that sufficient level of resources be put in place to support continuation of the in-depth monitoring undertaken to date. It is also disappointing that there is no commitment to introducing a similar system of peer-review monitoring to evaluate implementation of the recently adopted OECD Action Statement on Bribery and Officially Supported Export Credits, in line with demonstrated best practice.