

A Marshall Plan for Africa?

G8, Kananaskis, Canada, 2002 – what was achieved?
Nicholas Bayne reports back.

The last time I covered a G8 summit was in 1998, when the heads of government met in Birmingham, England (*LSE Magazine*, winter 1998). That was the first time Russia formally joined the leaders of the US, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada, plus the European Union, making the G7 into G8. In Mediterranean sunshine, a peaceful demonstration of 50,000 people calling for debt relief for poor countries circled the meeting site. The summit delegations mingled with the crowd, so that two unsuspecting Birmingham pensioners found themselves sharing a table with Bill Clinton at a canal-side pub.

But as the years passed, peaceful demonstrations turned to ugly anti-globalisation riots. A protester was killed on the streets of Genoa during the summit of 2001. So this year, for added security after the 11 September terrorist attacks, the Canadian hosts shut the summit away in the remote Rocky Mountain resort of Kananaskis. This made for greater informality – Tony Blair bumped into George Bush at 6.30am in the gym. It kept demonstrators at a safe distance – and in fact there were not very many. But it also kept out the media, including your correspondent, who were stuck in Calgary, 60 miles away.

Some groups were thus kept away from the summit, but others were let in. For the first time, the G8 leaders admitted a group of African heads of state, together with Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general. The Africans – Mbeki of South Africa, Obasanjo of Nigeria, Wade of Senegal and Bouteflika of Algeria – made up the steering



Above: G8 and African leaders at Kananaskis. Back row, left to right: Aznar (Spain), EU Presidency, Koizumi (Japan), Blair (UK), Putin (Russia), Bush (US), Schroeder (Germany), Berlusconi (Italy), Prodi (EU Commission). Front row: Mbeki (South Africa), Chirac (France), Obasanjo (Nigeria), Chrétien (Canada), Annan (UN), Bouteflika (Algeria), Wade (Senegal)

Left: President Obasanjo (Nigeria) giving his response to the G8 Africa Action Plan

committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They were there not as observers or guests, but as participants in their own right, pursuing themes developed by Kofi Annan himself, and by KY Amoako in the last *LSE Magazine*, summer 2002.

Africa was the principal subject for the Kananaskis summit. Mbeki, Obasanjo and Wade had come as guests to Genoa the year before and told the G8 about their plans for NEPAD. The G8 leaders were so impressed by the Africans' determination to take responsibility for their own revival that they promised to underwrite their efforts. Over the next 12 months, a special Africa group drew up a G8 Africa Action Plan, to be agreed and announced at Kananaskis.

NEPAD is a wholly African initiative. The African participants undertake to meet certain standards of political and economic governance, with their own system of peer review. Their aim is to encourage Western governments to improve aid flows and market access and Western firms to invest in Africa, in support of domestic programmes of development. The G8 Africa Action Plan provides a first response to NEPAD. It offers 'enhanced partnerships' to African countries that decide to improve their political and economic management. It parallels

the chapters of NEPAD, promising support for what the Africans are doing on their own initiative. It indicates that half the extra \$12 billion of aid per year, promised by the G8 members at the Monterrey conference in March, could go to Africa. This commitment was only confirmed by the heads themselves at Kananaskis; the Europeans and Canada were eager, but Bush was worried about resistance from the US Congress.

The Marshall Plan for Europe after World War II is often cited as the most successful example of continental recovery under external stimulus. The secret of the Marshall Plan was not only generous financial flows from the United States but the incentive given to the Europeans to cooperate among themselves. The combination of the G8 Africa Action Plan with NEPAD has many of the features of the Marshall Plan. The Africans are the owners of NEPAD and hold each other responsible for meeting its standards. Having persuaded the G8 leaders to support them, they have a strong incentive to earn that support. The G8 members, for their part, having committed themselves to back NEPAD, do not want to see it fail.

The obstacles facing NEPAD are huge. Africa, in addition to economic decline, is now struggling with the AIDS epidemic and the worst famine

for a decade. Political standards need improvement everywhere, including many of NEPAD's strongest backers. The G8 could easily get distracted from Africa. For the moment, Chirac has promised to give Africa top priority when he hosts next year's summit. Bush is actively engaged, as he plans his own African visit in 2003. But even at Kananaskis, the US concern over weapons of mass destruction was casting its shadow. Iraq itself was not mentioned but the summit's other main achievement was an agreement to spend \$20 billion in destroying and making safe nuclear and chemical weapons in the former Soviet Union.

But the Marshall Plan itself followed years of bitter conflict and economic failure. It succeeded against all expectations and its benefits long outlived the original flows of finance. The hope must be that the G8 and NEPAD can do the same for Africa. ■



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