

Helping the poor and the planet

This year's Gleneagles summit saw Blair back in the chair again and civil society urging the G8 to Make Poverty History. The G8 returned to debt relief and Africa and opened a new chapter on climate change. As Russia prepares to host its first summit in 2006, **Nicholas Bayne**, **Shinichiro Uda** and **Heidi Ullrich** reflect on the legacy of Gleneagles.

Aid, Africa and climate change

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown did not achieve all their objectives for Africa and poor countries generally. Brown's International Finance Facility to accelerate aid disbursements did not find favour. The summit did not endorse the recommendations of the UK government's Commission for Africa and was unspecific on trade issues. But the G8 leaders undertook to double aid for Africa by 2010, by \$25 billion per year, and to increase total aid by \$50 billion. They endorsed the deal struck by their finance ministers to grant 100 per cent relief on some poor countries' debts to institutions like the World Bank. They renewed commitments to help Africa with peacekeeping, better governance, education, health care and infrastructure. All these measures encouraged the African leaders present.

Unlike Africa, the G8 had kept off climate change, because of the widening gap between the US and the others. Blair took the risk of trying a fresh approach. This aimed to engage not only the Americans but also countries, like China and India, which were not required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the Kyoto Protocol. This approach nearly foundered on US reluctance to accept climate change was man-made. But Bush moved just far enough to permit agreement to launch a new dialogue, on climate change and clean energy, between the G8 and five big developing countries invited to Gleneagles (Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa).

Now make it happen

The G8 leaders did not allow themselves to be put off their course by

the suicide bombers in London, but closed ranks and stuck to their agenda. The key commitments on aid, Africa and climate change required the direct intervention of heads of government. Yet summits since Birmingham have proved better at innovating than implementing. Gleneagles' commitments on aid were for delivery in 2010, not immediately, while progress on climate change depended on a process that was only just beginning. Bush and Blair came to the summit fortified by recent re-election, but many other G8 heads faced an uncertain future. While they wanted Gleneagles itself to be a success, domestic problems could well distract them from putting their commitments into effect. The question remained: would the G8 summit keep its promises this time?

Civil society – guardian of the G8 promises

Gleneagles added a powerful participant to the G8 process in the shape of civil society. Although civil society has been present at G8 summits in various forms and fashions since 1998, the 2005 summit signalled a transformation in terms of the scope of its membership, the professionalisation of its campaign, and its critical role in the implementation of the commitments made by the leaders. In short, Gleneagles witnessed civil society taking on the role of guardian of the promises made by the G8 leaders.

Reminiscent of the smaller but still substantial ring formed by 50,000 Jubilee 2000 demonstrators at the mass mobilisation of civil society at the 1998 UK summit in



PICTURES BY HEIDI ULLRICH



G8 demonstrators at the Make Poverty History event in Edinburgh, July 2005, and civil society representatives at the G8 Summit (left to right) Wangari Maathai, Keynan Nobel laureate, Bob Geldof, Kumi Naidoo, secretary general and CEO of Civicos, and Bono.

Birmingham, up to 400,000 diverse members of civil society marched in Edinburgh on 2 July 2005, forming a white ring to symbolise their unity in calling for trade justice, dropping debt, and more and better aid for developing countries, in particular those in Africa. The massive mobilisation was the result of months of politically and technologically savvy campaigning by the UK-based Make Poverty History coalition, itself a member of the Global Campaign Against Poverty. A week long series of events by civil society, some peaceful such as worldwide Live 8 concerts, and some less so, resulting in clashes with police, served to raise public awareness of the G8 and their initiatives on Africa and climate change to new levels.

However, the significance of the transformation in civil society's relationship with the G8 is likely to have the greatest impact in terms of continuing to place public pressure on the leaders to implement their commitments on Africa and climate change. Despite a division of opinion on the final day of the summit between the celebrity spokespeople of the Make Poverty History campaign and some NGO representatives over the assessment of achievements reached by the G8 leaders, in the months following Gleneagles at such key events as the UK holding the Presidency of the EU, the UN World Summit on the Millennium Development Goals and the WTO Ministerial, civil society campaigners continued to be united

in calling on the G8 leaders to keep their promises on trade, debt relief and aid for Africa as well as take additional steps forward in addressing climate change.

Tony Blair summed up the achievements of the summit on the issue of Africa by stating: 'It isn't the end of poverty in Africa, but it is the hope that it can be ended. It isn't all everyone wanted, but it is progress – real and achievable progress.' When the G8 meet in Russia in 2006, civil society will no doubt again play a key role in ensuring that additional progress is in fact achieved.

Adding legitimacy

Since 2000, leaders of selected developing countries have been invited to the summits to offer their perspectives on specific topics. Gleneagles continued this trend, with leaders from seven African countries (Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania) and four emerging countries (Brazil, China, India and Mexico) meeting with the G8.

African and G8 leaders agreed that the effectiveness of overseas aid would largely depend on African countries taking the initiative for their own development including increasing access to education and health care and working to enhance democracy and political stability, as well as building their capacity to trade. On climate change, the G8 and the large emerging economies agreed to continue their dialogue on the development of clean energy technology and sustainable energy sources

while working towards the reduction of emissions. The G8 outreach to other countries adds much needed legitimacy to a global governance forum consisting only of participants from developed countries.

The Russians, who host the G8 for the first time in 2006, are likely to invite non-G8 leaders to the St Petersburg Summit, since the chosen themes of education and energy security have global implications.



Nicholas Bayne

is a fellow of the International Trade Policy Unit at LSE and author of *Staying Together* (Ashgate, 2005).



Shinichiro Uda

is president of the LSE International Social Economic Forum in Japan.



Heidi Ullrich

(PhD Government 2002) is a guest teacher in LSE's Department of International Relations.

Global Civil Society 2005/6

(Sage, Oct 2005)



This yearbook, now in its fifth edition, details information and trends in the global civil society movement. Compiled and edited by staff in LSE's Centre for the Study of Global Governance, it was launched at the School with a debate on global risk: how civil society responds by Professor Mary Kaldor, Centre co-director, and Professor Lord Giddens.

The launch was accompanied by a photography exhibition hosted by the Centre and Panos Pictures, a London based independent photo agency representing photo-journalists worldwide. The exhibition, held in LSE's atrium, was sponsored by Sage. See www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/Global