

A Summit of Significant Success: The G8 at St. Petersburg 2006

John Kirton, G8 Research Group¹
July 19, 2006

The G8 leaders' 2006 gathering at St. Petersburg on July 15-17 was a summit of significant success. It largely delivered its ambitious and innovative priority agenda on energy, health and education, responded effectively to the breaking crisis in Lebanon, and deepened democracy in a Russia hosting a regular G8 summit for its first time.

A. Delivering Priority Agenda

In overall terms, St. Petersburg set new highs on some key dimensions of summit performance (see Appendix A). It produced 311 specific, concrete commitments — the highest of any summit since they started in 1975. It also set several new directions, affirming a large number and broad array of democratic values as the foundation for its work in energy security, education, health and corruption, as well as on Africa, counterfeiting, counterterrorism, UN counterterrorism, stabilization, nonproliferation and the Middle East (see Appendix B). Its documented deliberations approached the historic high set at Sea Island in 2004. While the \$4.4 billion in new money mobilized was far less than the \$212 billion raised at Gleneagles in 2006, it was still above the sum raised at Evian in 2003. St. Petersburg also created three new G8 bodies to help carry out its work, and received grudging recognition from the leading media across the G8 countries for its good work.

B. Responding to the Lebanon Crisis

St. Petersburg also responded effectively to the escalating crisis in Lebanon, which erupted just before the summit started and took centre stage during its second half. Building on their strong consensus on terrorism, the Middle East Peace Process and the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, G8 leaders crafted a detailed, balanced and forceful declaration on the Middle East that was endorsed by United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan and the other outreach participants at the summit the next day. The summit's strong unified statement seemed to have an immediate impact, as the violence in the region levelled off, Israel signalled it would accept a cease fire on the G8's terms, and world oil prices declined.

C. A Summit of Significant Achievement

Perhaps the largest and most long-lived legacy of St. Petersburg is its impact in deepening democracy in Russia itself. This impact unfolded in the lead-up to and during the summit itself. Given the G8's core mission of promoting open democracy, individual liberty and social advance, and the many doubts about whether Russia deserved to be in the democratic G8 club, these were of particular significance, as they unfolded in ten specific ways.

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Laura Sunderland, Janel Smith, Katya Gorbunova, Matto Mildenburger and the on-site and home teams of the G8 Research Group as well as the G8 Research Team of the State University Higher School of Economics.

1. Crossing the Iron Curtain of Ignorance

The first contribution was in overcoming the iron curtain of ignorance dividing Russia and its G8 partners still imprisoned by the all-too-convenient imagery of the old Cold War. In its coverage of Russia's January 1, 2006, cut-off of gas to Ukraine, which would not pay for it, and Ukraine's subsequent cut-off of Russian gas to Europe, the western media overwhelmingly blamed Russia. In return, Russians responded with bewilderment and anger at this harsh reaction to their effort to follow the market principles long preached by the West. The combination was a stunning display of the strength of the continuing iron curtain of ignorance, inherited Cold War imagery and mistrust between Russia and those outside. Yet as the months unfolded, Russia's presidency of the G8 forced those on both sides to take a closer look at the other and to learn more about the other's faults and achievements, about the wide and deep range of their interdependence and shared vulnerabilities, and about how best to induce the other to pull together for the common cause. Due to the particularly dense summit preparatory and follow-up process mounted by the Russian hosts, to the novelty of Russia hosting the summit and to the thousands of contacts among ministers, officials, experts, parliamentarians, legislators, youths and others, a dynamic process of direct contact and deeper learning was unleashed. Many Russians thus directly discovered what western democracy, with all its flaws, was really like, and that they liked it, suitably adopted and improved, for themselves at home (Kirton 2006).

2. Fostering Permanent Nongovernmental Networks

Through "Civil 8," the Russian presidency's innovative process for engaging global and Russian civil society in the summit, many hundreds of Russian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) met their global counterparts on a face-to-face basis for the first time (Pamfilova 2006). Through their shared cause of trying to shape the agenda, emphasis and outcomes of the St. Petersburg Summit, they have discovered the realities of one another's countries, shared best practices and techniques, and formed mutual support relationships and the foundations for coalitions and campaigns. These will endure, and extend and expand to other events long after the summit's end. The rapidly emerging civil society movement in Russia received important international reinforcement at a critical stage.

3. Deepening Domestic Understanding of Markets and Transparency

Russia's skilled summit officials, who had lived and worked in the West, had an intuitive and rich understanding of open democracy and markets that many of their colleagues in the domestic departments of the Russian government often lacked. The unusually vibrant process of G8 experts and ministerial meetings to prepare the summit — the latter featuring gatherings for energy, health and education — brought knowledge of how the established democracies did things to those in the domestic departments with great force. Thus Russia's initial G8 proposals on energy security contained little recognition of the contribution that free market mechanisms could make. However, by mid-March, the G8 energy ministers "Chair's Statement," drafted by its Russian host, proclaimed that "meeting energy security challenges will require reliance on market-based pricing." The summit itself declared that the democratic, market principles of "transparency" come first.

4. Environmentalism

Russia's initial approach to energy security had allowed only a small role for environmental protection and conservation. As early as February the Civil 8 process had injected a strong emphasis on environmentalism into the energy security file. Reinforced by such pressure, and the

G8-generated global attention to Russia's approach to energy security, President Vladimir Putin soon after made an historic, if expensive, decision to re-route a new pipeline to protect the ecological integrity of Lake Baikal as the largest body of freshwater in the world. The St. Petersburg summit's document on energy security, with its emphasis on transparency, efficiency and conservation, renewables and climate change control reflected the values of environmental democracy to a considerable degree.

5. Putin's Public Promises

At the Civil 8 gathering in Moscow on July 3-4, President Putin as the summit host met — for the first time in G8 history — with more than 650 leaders of civil society organizations from around the world. In a fully public session, transmitted to the entire global community through the free media covering the event, he openly heard and responded frankly to the consensus advice of civil society on issues all across the summit's agenda, and beyond it as well. Specific issues in Russia were raised as part of this dialogue. He made 17 public pledges to civil society that he would take new, specific actions at and outside the summit, in response to civil society advice (see Appendix C). In particular, he promised that should the recently approved NGO bill regulating the activities of civil society bodies in Russia prove more restrictive than its predecessors, he would amend it to remove its restrictive effect.

6. Russia's Accession to the World Trade Organization

The action forcing deadline and the need for trade-offs brought by the approaching summit led to United States to more substantially toward agreeing, subject to congressional approval, on the eve of the St. Petersburg Summit that Russia would formally be admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The summit itself endorsed Russia's expeditious entry on the same terms all other members enjoyed. The prospect and reality of Russia's membership will induce it to abide by the rule of law in its domestic and international commercial relations, improve its transparency and predictability, and give it and its trade partners access to international dispute settlement mechanisms through the global trade judiciary of the Appellate Body of the WTO. It will foster an even more open Russian economy, and a culture of respect for the rule of law that could radiate throughout Russian society as a whole. In contrast, failure to admit Russia, as President Putin noted earlier, would induce Russia to stop abiding by those WTO disciplines it is already voluntarily respects.

7. Economic Opening

In order to boost its G8 image and credentials, Russia in the immediate lead-up to St. Petersburg opened its economy in important ways. On July 1 it made the ruble convertible, allowing money to be transferred in and out of Russia. On July 15 it allowed some shares of its state-owned oil firm, Rosneft, to be sold to Russian citizens and foreigners, trade freely on the London Stock Exchange and thus be subject to international regulatory, accounting and corporate governance rules. It similarly planned to privatize, with majority foreign ownership, some of its electricity-generating firms.

8. Bilateral Democracy Dialogue

The onsite bilateral meetings before and during the summit between President Putin and his individual G8 partners provided an opportunity for the latter to express in detail directly, on a private and interactive basis, their philosophy of democratic governance, their particular concerns about Russia's democratic deficit and their proposals and preferred best practices regarding what

Russia should do. This process began informally over dinner on the evening of July 14 and more formally on the morning of July 15 when presidents Bush and Putin met. During their second encounter President Bush shared his philosophy of government and discussed land reform and property rights in Russia. At the subsequent news conference, President Putin described his response as follows:

We have discussed this issue at length on the initiative of U.S. and on my own initiative as well. It is true that we assume that nobody knows better than us how we can strengthen our own nation, but we know for sure that we cannot strengthen our nation without developing democratic institutions. That is the path we will take, but certainly we will do this by ourselves.

9. President Putin's Democratic Declaration

The G8 summit's new conferences and sessions induced President Putin to declare in more detail and with greater directness his devotion to democratic principles that his listeners understood. In doing so he may well have internalized his declared norms, and in ways at least raised the disincentives to acting in ways contrary to his personally, publicly declared and thus internationally embedded values. At his first news conference at the end of the opening dinner on July 15, Putin indicated he intended to step down as president of Russia, in accordance with the current constitutional requirement, when his second term came to an end in 2008. Until then, he declared, he was devoting to making democracy and the market economy an irreversible reality in Russia's life.

10. Putin's Press Conferences

Unusually for the host of a summit, Putin gave a news conference to the attending 2,500 media representatives at the end of each long and demanding day of the event. There he spent much time with the world's media in a free-wheeling session, taking questions in an uncontrolled fashion from reporters of all stripes. His answers were frank and forthright. Here he provided more real access to the free world's and Russian media than many enjoyed back home.

References

Kirton, Jon (2006), "The Road to St. Petersburg," pp. 18-22 in Maurice Fraser, ed., *G8 Summit 2006: Issues and Instruments, St. Petersburg, 15-17 July, 2006*. Agora Projects, London.

Pamfilova, Ella (2006), "The Civil G8 2006," p. 23 in Maurice Fraser, ed., *G8 Summit 2006: Issues and Instruments, St. Petersburg, 15-17 July, 2006*. Agora Projects, London.

Appendix A: G8 Summit Performance at St. Petersburg 2006

Date	Domestic Political Management Media Monitoring			Deliberative		Directional References to values		Decisional		Global governance New G8 bodies
	% G8 content	# G8 editorials	% TV stories	Document #	# words	#	Breadth %	# commitments	Money mobilized	
July 11	6%	0.4								
July 12	8%	0.7	4.0%							
July 13	6%	0.5	5.0%							
July 14	12%	1.0	12.0%							
July 15	10%	0.7	19.1%							
July 16	18%	0.3	12.7%							
				1. Disease	5,717	33	64	52	\$4.4b	0
				2. Energy	5,449	61	36	108	0	1
				3. Education	2,832	41	59	48	0	0
				4. Africa	3,244	5	23	12	^a	0
				5. Corruption	873	53	32	16	0	
				6. IPR/counterfeiting	595	11	18	8	0	1
				7. Trade	681	9	23	7	0	0
				8. Counter-terrorism	746	11	14	16	0	0
				9. UN Counter-terrorism	1,236	11	18	8	0	0
				10. Stabilization and Reconstruction	936	2	9	4	0	1
				11. Non-proliferation	2,306	6	18	20	0	0
				12. Middle East	815	2	5	1	0	0
				13. Global Partnership	2,052	5	14	3	0	0
July 17				14. Statement by the G8, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, the CIS, the African Union, and the International Organizations	183	4	5	0	0	0
				15. Chair's Summary	3,030	19	55	8	0	1
TOTAL	10% (ave)	0.6 (ave)	10.6% (ave)	15 documents	30,695	273	26.2 (ave)	303	\$4.4b	4
Earlier high					38,420 (2004)			251 (2004)	\$212b (2005)	
Documents to the Leaders										
				14. Nuclear Safety Report	813			8	0	0

^a Same as Health document.

**Appendix B:
Democratic Values in St. Petersburg Summit Documents**

	Total	Energy	Health	Education	Africa	Corruption	IPR Piracy	Trade	Counter-Terrorism	UN's Counter-Terrorism Program	Stabilization and Reconstruction	Nonproliferation	Middle East	Outreach	Global Partnership	Chair's statement
Market	15	13	0	0	0	2	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Transparency	30	10	3	4	3	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Regulation	14	7	5	1	0	0	1		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competition	7	5	0	2	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Legality	12	5	1	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	1	0	4	1	1
Contracts	4	4	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Openness	7	3	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Corruption	32	3	0	0	0	29	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Standards	13	3	2	0	0	0	0		3	2	0	3	0	0	0	0
Governance	8	2	0	0	1	3	0		0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Rule of law	32	2	0	2	0	8	3	3	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	1
Information	24	2	9	6	0	1	2		0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1
Reporting	13	1	10	0	1	0	0		0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Fairness	1	1	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ethics	1	0	1	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Access	9	0	2	3	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Democracy	9			3	1	1	0		1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Integration	6			6	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mobility	4			4	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discrimination	4			3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property rights	8			3	0	0	5		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Participation	3			2	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	256	61	33	41	7	53	11	9	11	11	2	6	2	4	5	19

Notes:

Includes values of open democracy and individual liberty but not social advance
Markets includes “free markets”
Legality includes “illegal logging,” “illegal wildlife trafficking”
Contracts includes “enforcement,” “dispute settlement”
Standards includes “harmonization,” “standards of operation”
Rule of law includes “[trade] rules,” “legal,” “rules of origin”
Information includes “information exchange,” “raising public awareness,” “exchange of ideas,” “sharing of ideas”
Reporting includes “monitoring,” “surveillance,” “inspection,” “detection”
Property rights includes “intellectual property,” “rights of innovators”
Access includes “accessible,” “market access”
Transparency includes “transparent governance”
Openness includes “open exchange,” “open markets”
Democracy includes “democratic societies,” “democratic citizenship”
Participation includes “civic participation,” “participation in society”
Integration includes “integration of immigrants,” “social cohesion,” “acceptance”
Discrimination includes people and trade (countries)

Excludes private sector, public private partnerships, stakeholders, civil society, NGOs, references in annexes of members funding pledges, self-monitoring, intolerance, exchange of knowledge

Appendix C: Commitments by Vladimir Putin to the Civil 8

From the unofficial English translation of President Vladimir Putin's address to the participants of the Civil 8 Summit.

2006-1. Many of your ideas, as I said, have been reflected in the summary documents. Particularly, the NGO proposals 'A Community for Creation of Systematic Mechanisms, Consultation and Monitoring Realisation of Summit Resolutions' are worthy of specific attention.

2006-2. I am sure that your experience, knowledge of real life, and closeness to the people; as you work directly with the people, as reflected in your recommendations, will be substantial additions to the agenda for the forthcoming G8 summit.

2006-3. I am just drawing your attention to the process of our work on this law. I concede that this document is not perfect. This I can do. But that should not stop Russian non-governmental organisations, or any public organisations, from drawing attention, particularly in the course of this legislation's application, to legal practice which will be established during its application; they may make necessary remarks, proposals, and **I assure you that we will, of course, take these remarks and proposals into account.**

2006-4. I want to assure you that everything that you expound will, in essence, reach the G8 countries' heads, and that not only will we study them attentively, but we will also analyse them most critically, and will take them into account in making ultimate decisions.

2006-5. Energy security must include environmental security, there are no disputes of problems in this regard.

2006-6. With specific regard to the G8 summit in Saint Petersburg, I want to draw your attention to the fact that **the subject under discussion in Saint Petersburg in relation to atomic energy will not be development of atomic energy worldwide, but rather issues of ensuring the security of atomic energy. This is what the subject of our talks will be.** But of course, **since there is this recommendation from you, put together by you in the area of development, we will, of course, raise this with the G8 leaders,** my colleagues, although, I should tell you now, several of my colleagues have even been reluctant to discuss this topic on principle.

2006-7. Therefore, in the end everyone agreed that we **should discuss problems of atomic energy security in Saint Petersburg.**

2006-8. Now specifically. Allocation of additional funds. You said 10 billion, and in principle this may not be a large amount for the G8 countries, and this problem could be solved. The issue is that we should fulfil all of our responsibilities and resolutions that have already been undertaken in this regard. Not all resolutions have been implemented in full, and **our position is that we must first deliver on resolutions accepted previously, and only then can we undertake new responsibilities or announce new responsibilities.** Although the question raised is absolutely the right one.

2006-9. (regarding creating a system for exchange of information and experience between non-government organisations and the professional communities of G8 countries) I must regretfully say that our work on preparation of documents for the G8 summit is too tangled with

bureaucracy, which is a heavy burden. **I doubt that we will be able to inset this into the concluding documents in time**, and I speak of this with regret, as I believe that this is an extremely important topic and an interesting and entirely realistic proposal. Therefore I promise you that, firstly, **I will definitely mention this during the free discussions on this theme, and secondly, that this will be included in the presidential closing address.** And I think that my colleagues will definitely react to your proposal. We will think about what can be done in order to realise this proposal.

2006-10. You said that you would like to see the subject of combating infectious diseases on the agenda for this and future G8 summits. The agendas for future summits will be set by the countries hosting them, and next year, this will be the Federal Republic of Germany. **I will pass on your wish, of course.** But as with education, the fight against infectious diseases is one of the subjects that always comes up on the agenda in one way or another.

2006-11. (regarding infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS and drug addiction) I want to assure you that not only will I pass on your concerns, but I am sure — and I will say this to Mrs Merkel — that the future German presidency will also give its attention to the problems you have raised. (I do not have the right to speak for Mrs Merkel, but I know how the German leadership feels about these issues.)

2006-12. (regarding development aid, continued growth and its relation to agricultural subsidies as a boundary to growth) Therefore what you are saying does not, to a great extent, apply to us, but to our colleagues. **I want them to hear this too**, because a large number of NGOs in the G8 countries would defend, say, agriculture subsidies in their countries, and this will continue to produce poverty in the developing countries. Then the G8 leaders will kindly write off these debts over and over again.

2006-13. (regarding the importance and centrality of human rights abuses) ...I give you my word that everything you have said here will be passed on to my colleagues, you can have no doubt of that. It will also be a subject of our discussions.

2006-14. [The Iranian nuclear programme] will certainly be one of the main issues, without any doubt. We very much hope that our Iranian partners will accept the proposals the six countries have made and that we will be able to open up dialogue and negotiations based on these proposals as soon as possible. We would very much like to see these talks begin before the summit in St Petersburg, but it seems this is not possible.

2006-15. Russia is committed to doing everything it can to help settle this crisis and we will work together with our European and American partners to find acceptable solutions so as to give Iran access to modern technology on the one hand, while on the other hand addressing the international community's concerns regarding proliferation of nuclear military technology and ensuring that all work in this area is, as you absolutely correctly said, under the constant control of international organisations, above all the IAEA.

2006-16. [Combating terrorism] will definitely be at the centre of our discussion.

2006-17. [regarding genetically modified products] we will insist on using the standards that the NGOs are proposing.

Notes: The unofficial English translation of President Putin's address to the participants of the Civil 8 Summit and can be located at en.civilg8.ru/documents/1987.php (accessed July 14, 2006).

Inclusions: All occasions when Putin specifically commits himself to raise an issue with the G8, or states that Russia will take a specific action in a direction recommended by the Civil 8 are included as commitments to the Civil 8.

Exclusions: Occasions when Putin mentions that he "agrees" with the Civil 8 comments or says that the comments are "good" or "correct," but does not specifically state that he will raise the issues at the summit with his colleagues; occasions when Putin mentions that state leaders "should" or "could" do something, but does not specifically mention that he will raise the issues at the summit with his colleagues are not included as commitments to the Civil 8.