

## 19. Perspectives on the Kananaskis Priorities: Promoting Development

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Seven years ago, French president Jacques Chirac made development the centrepiece of the Lyon G7 Summit of 1996. At the next summit, at Denver in 1997, United States president Bill Clinton put Africa high on the agenda, although this did not lead to agreed G7 action. Ever since then, the annual G8 Summits, which now include Russia, have broadened their concern with the problems of poor countries. The heads of government recognized that, without action to help them, many of the poorest countries would gain none of the benefits of globalization and could become marginalized in the international economic system.

This year's Summit at Kananaskis concentrates, once again, on the objective of improving conditions of life in Africa, the continent that contains the largest number of very poor countries. Unlike the poor countries of Asia, such as China and India, which have seen strong growth, many African countries have been going backward economically.

So this year's concentration on Africa is fully justified. The Summit's discussion will focus on the G8's response to the **New Plan for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**, treated in Lecture 18. But it will also pull together many strands of work set in hand at earlier summits to benefit poor countries both in Africa and elsewhere. Three of these topics will receive special attention at Kananaskis: bridging the digital divide, fighting the spread of infectious diseases and promoting universal primary edu-

cation. I shall deal with each in turn, as the main content of this lecture.

### **A. Bridging the Digital Divide**

The Okinawa Summit of 2000 launched the idea that better access to information and communications technology (ICT) for developing countries and its wider diffusion could enable these countries to accelerate their development rapidly and take advantage of the benefits of globalization. The Summit created a Digital Opportunity Task Force, or the Dot Force, with a wide composition to realize this concept. It included not just G8 governments, but also people from developing countries, international institutions, private business firms and non-profit **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)**.

Initial reactions to the Dot Force were skeptical. People wondered how poor countries, without reliable electricity or telephone systems, could really benefit from ICT. But by the time the Dot Force presented its report to the Genoa Summit in 2001, this skepticism had been dispelled and the group gave evidence of remarkable synergy. The Dot Force produced a set of nine basic recommendations, including:

- All countries should draw up national e-strategies, with outside help to make them compatible;
- Connections to ICT should be made easier;
- ICT should be used to the full in all forms of education and training;
- Private business involvement in ICT should be encouraged;
- Special projects should be developed to help the poorest countries.

During the preparations for Kananaskis this year, the Dot Force has concentrated on

how ICT can help Africa, especially with e-strategies, ICT connections and involving ICT in business. The Dot Force will report to the Summit on 20 projects developed under its aegis, including in education and health care.

After Kananaskis, the Dot Force's work will continue under the general umbrella of the United Nations. But its projects will be taken forward by a variety of networks, usually involving public/private partnerships and driven by the private sector. One of the conclusions of the Dot Force's work is that ICT projects often work best with very informal structures, taking advantage of the flexibility and wide international access provided by the technology.

### **B. Fighting the Spread of Infectious Diseases**

The Okinawa Summit also recognized the serious handicap suffered by poor countries by their vulnerability to infectious diseases, especially malaria, tuberculosis and above all HIV/AIDS. These diseases cause 6 million deaths a year — 10% of deaths worldwide — almost all in poor countries. Fighting the spread of these diseases is thus essential to development.

In the year that followed Okinawa, the scale of the tragedy of HIV/AIDS in Africa became more widely known. The 2001 Genoa Summit responded by initiating, with the UN Secretary-General, the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** (the Global Health Fund), with initial funds of about US\$2 billion from governments and private donors. This fund was never intended to meet all the costs of fighting these diseases, estimated at US\$7–10 billion per year for AIDS alone. National healthcare programs must remain the responsibilities of governments, in Africa and elsewhere. The aim of the Global Health Fund is to supply drugs, vaccines and other health products that poor countries could not otherwise afford and to stimulate research into new treatments for these diseases.

The management of the Global Health Fund involves not only governments but also private

firms and foundations and medical NGOs, which all have representatives on its Board. As a new institution, the Global Health Fund has become operational very fast. It issued its first call for projects in February 2002 and attracted 300 applications, requesting over US\$5 billion over five years. In April, the board selected 40 programs for financing in 31 countries and identified 18 more as suitable if certain conditions were met. The total cost of these will be US\$616 million over two years — and US\$1.6 billion if extended to five years. More than half of the programs are in Africa and three quarters are for HIV/AIDS, either alone linked to the other two diseases.

The Global Health Fund has moved with commendable speed to start disbursing its funds. But it is clear that the initial US\$2 billion will soon be used up and it will need replenishment. Pricing policies for drugs will also need attention. While countries producing their own generic drugs have now more freedom, poor countries without this capacity need to be able to import drugs at low prices. Pharmaceutical companies have declared they are ready to supply such cheap drugs, but a mechanism is needed to make sure they are not diverted back into rich country markets and thus defeat their object.

### **C. Promoting Universal Primary Education**

Like good health, education is an essential component of development. At Genoa in 2001 the G8 leaders identified education, especially primary education for both sexes, as a high priority topic for this year's Summit. They set up a task force of officials to make recommendations on how to advance the goal set at the World Education Forum's Dakar Conference in 2000 of universal primary education by 2015.

Much action is already directed towards this goal. The relief of debt for poor countries, mainly in Africa, is intended to release funds to be spent on education, as well as health care. The Dot Force has already identified ways of using ICT in primary education in poor

countries, while the International Labour Organization is working to deter child labour, so that children can stay in school longer. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is co-ordinating action to follow up the Dakar Conference, under the heading "Education for All," while the **World Bank** is developing new ways of financing primary education programs. Even so, progress towards the Dakar goals is very uneven. Especially in Africa, and most of all in those countries affected by AIDS, enrolment is not being sustained and too many children — especially girls — are being taken out of school early or denied schooling altogether.

The G8 at Kananaskis will seek to give fresh momentum to the Education for All campaign and a new sense of direction. It is a sensitive matter for outside agencies to help primary education, since all countries, rich or poor, want to retain ownership of their policies for schooling. The G8 may propose some guidelines on how broader development policies can help to advance education goals and how increased external financial resources can best support national efforts.

#### **D. Conclusions**

If we take these three topics together, it is clear that the G8's approach to development issues

has become much more inclusive. This is shown in the following ways:

- At Lyon in 1996, for the first time, the heads of international development institutions were invited to meet the G8 leaders. While such a meeting has not been repeated at Summit level, the G8 at ministerial level works much closer with the institutions than before.
- Especially since Okinawa in 2000, the G8 have been involving private sector firms and non-profit NGOs much more deeply in the preparation and follow-up on development issues. This reflects the wider resources and expertise that they can bring.
- The meeting of the G8 heads of government with African leaders at Genoa in 2001 has led them to become deeply involved in plans for the revival of Africa. But this began with an initiative by the Africans themselves. Both here and in other contexts the G8 are concerned to ensure that countries retain ownership of their own development strategies — they are not imposing them from outside.

#### **References**

To come

#### **Recommended Reading**

To come

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you suppose the Dot Force recommended that private businesses be involved in developing information and communications technology in Africa? What problems could arise with the introduction of corporate control?
2. For good reason the Global Health Fund was never intended to meet all the costs of fighting diseases; however, it only received US\$2 billion of an estimated cost well in excess of US\$10 billion. Can the African nations reasonably be expected to be able to cover this large disparity? What are the alternatives?
3. Can the G8 simultaneously balance such major issues as health, education and technological development for a continent as large and diverse as Africa? Where do you believe their priorities should fall, and why?
4. Pharmaceutical companies have declared they are ready to supply drugs at cheap prices for Africa. How strong do you believe this commitment is? How much are these companies willing to sacrifice? Can the G8 and the Global Health Fund develop a cost-adjusted global pharmaceutical system?
5. How realistic is the World Education Forum's goal of universal primary education by 2015? What major non-financial obstacles are there, and how much influence can the G8 have in combating them?

## Quiz

1. What does the "Dot" of Dot Force refer to?
  - a. Development of Open Technology
  - b. inter-Departments of Technology
  - c. Digital Opportunity Task
  - d. Directorate of Telecommunications
2. How much funding was contributed by governments and private donors to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, an initiative developed by the G8 at the 2001 Genoa Summit in conjunction with the UN Secretary-General?
  - a. US\$2 billion
  - b. US\$5 billion
  - c. US\$7 billion
  - d. US\$10 billion
3. What percentage of deaths world-wide are caused by infectious diseases, primarily malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS each year?
  - a. 2%
  - b. 5%
  - c. 10%
  - d. 15%
4. The World Education Forum's Dakar Conference in 2000 set as its goal universal primary education by what year?
  - a. 2015
  - b. 2010
  - c. 2025
  - d. 2050
5. What percentage of programs selected by the Global Health Fund were for Africa?
  - a. 10%
  - b. 20%
  - c. 30%
  - d. over 50%