

G20 Economic Summit: Plans for the Second Meeting in April 2009

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Preface

This report on the “G20 Economic Summit: Plans for the Second Meeting” is compiled by the G20 Research Group largely from public sources as an aid to researchers and other stakeholders interested in the G20 leaders’ meetings. It will be updated periodically as plans for the summit evolve. Note that this document refers to the G20 leaders’ meeting (or summit), which took place on November 14-15, 2008, in Washington, DC (as opposed to the G20 finance ministers forum, which was founded in 1999, and other groupings such as the G20 developing countries formed in response to the agricultural negotiations at the World Trade Organization).

1. Introduction: G20 Economic Summit

The Group of Twenty (G20) leaders met for the first time on November 15, 2008, in Washington’s National Building Museum. The official name of the meeting was the “Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy.” Participants from both developed and systematically significant countries gathered to discuss the global economic and financial problems that are affecting the world. The G20’s members are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. Spain and the Netherlands also participated in the first meeting under the auspices of the European Union. The second G20 summit is scheduled to take place on April 2, 2009. The United Kingdom will host the meeting in London.

The work of the G20 finance ministers led to discussions of other “20” groups. The G20 finance ministers’ group first met in 1999 and met for the tenth time on November 8-9 2008, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Under the Gleneagles Dialogue, since 2005 a group of 20 ministers in the fields of environment and energy have met, most recently in Japan, to discuss issues associated with global warming. On the margins of the G8 Hokkaido Summit in Japan in July 2008, the 16 Major Economies Meeting (MEM-16) was held at the summit level, following official-level meetings of this forum by the United States in 2007. In both cases, membership largely overlaps that of the G20 finance ministers.¹ Former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin has advocated a “Leaders 20” (L20) forum, since the creation of the G20 finance ministers’ forum, and it appears that with the “special” meeting in Washington in November, his L20 has come to life.

¹ The G20 Gleneagles Dialogue is comprised of members from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. The MEM-16 is comprised of members from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

2. Agenda

UK prime minister Gordon Brown said the second G20 summit, which he will host in April 2009, “will deal with the major questions of economic actions that are necessary.” It will look specifically at attempts to create colleges of supervisors, which are intended to share information on the world’s largest financial institutions, Brown’s office said. Talks will also examine “the impact of the macroeconomic policy action, both monetary and fiscal, on the economy, and consider what further coordinated steps the G20 countries can take,” said a spokesman for Brown’s office. Many of the world’s largest economies have already announced significant new fiscal stimulus packages. In the U.S., the Federal Reserve and the Treasury said they planned to provide \$800 billion to aid the market for consumer debt and to make mortgage loans cheaper and more available. The European Commission urged EU governments to commit to around \$256 billion in spending and tax cuts to help Europe through the downturn. It said the bulk of money for a two-year “European Economic Recovery Plan” would need to come from the 27 EU governments.² (November 26, 2008, *Associated Press Newswires*)

Currencies

The consolidation of the world financial system stability through the creation of regional reserve currencies will be one of the problems to be discussed at G20 summit, due to be held in London on April 2, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said. “Russian president Dmitry Medvedev and Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez discussed at their meeting the measures, developing the G20 principles approved in Washington, which are to be discussed at the next G20 meeting in London on April 2. One of the problems to be discussed is the consolidation of the stability of the international financial system by creating regional reserve currencies,” he said. “This measure is a necessity, not an invention. The rouble and the yuan are objectively becoming centres of such regional currency support structures. The euro is already in existence. The dollar will not cease to exist in the foreseeable future. A possibility of creating special currency in the Arab world is being discussed,” Lavrov continued. He reminded that at an extraordinary summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America (ALBA) held on November 26 it had been agreed upon that a regional accounting unit, initially called a “sukre,” could be created. “They agreed to assign the experts to analyse ways of using it not as real currency so far, but as accounting unit in trade and financial operations in general,” Lavrov said.³ (November 28, 2008, *ITAR-TASS World Service*)

Credit Cards

British prime minister Gordon Brown said there need to be “proper measures to regulate the” credit card industry. He said that one of the issues on the agenda for a meeting between UK business secretary Peter Mandelson and credit card firms was to look at

² *Associated Press Newswires* (November 26, 2008), “Britain to host G-20 meeting in April.”

³ *ITAR-TASS World Service* (November 28, 2008), “G20 to discuss creation of regional reserve currencies.”

“excessive interest rates that are being charged.” The meeting is being attended by representatives from APACS (the United Kingdom payments association) and about a dozen credit card companies. Brown also said it is “imperative that when the oil prices come down, that companies are as quick to put prices down as they were” to lift prices as the price of oil climbed.⁴ (November 26, 2008, *Dow Jones News Service*)

Unemployment

During his address to the summit in November, Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd predicted unemployment would be the biggest problem facing leaders when they next met. “When unemployment hits, it goes up like an elevator — very sharply — and it comes down like an escalator — very slow,” he said. “It is essential to grasp that this crisis is continuing and there is no alternative but to stimulate our economies now and at a scale to prevent a large rise in global unemployment.” Failure to act could condemn the globe to the next Great Depression that many fear. “If the world fails on this challenge of large scale stimulus we will turn a significant global recession into something worse,” Rudd said.⁵ (November 16, 2008, *Australian Associated Press General News*)

Working Groups

To further develop and review the ideas put forth at the G20 summit in November, a working group was established under the G20 umbrella. The leaders will discuss its recommendations on various issues at their next meeting.⁶ (November 16, 2008, *Yonhap English News*)

3. Participants

Switzerland wants to take part in the next G20 summit in April on the global economic crisis, economy minister Doris Leuthard said. “I hope we can be present” at the April 2, 2009, meeting in London, Leuthard said, adding “we would not just be extras.” While Switzerland does not figure among the world’s top 20 economic powers, it makes the rankings as a financial centre, Leuthard said. She predicted that the country would not escape a recession in technical terms — two consecutive quarters of negative gross domestic product — and forecast growth of well below 1 percent in 2009 with deep cuts in exports. However Switzerland should not experience a major recession accompanied by soaring unemployment and a collapse in demand, Leuthard said.⁷ (December 6, 2008, *Agence France Presse*)

⁴ *Dow Jones News Service* (November 26, 2008), UK Brown: Obama To Attend G20 London Meeting.”

⁵ *Australian Associated Press General News* (November 16, 2008), “US: Rudd puts world leaders on notice to act on jobs crisis.”

⁶ *Yonhap English News* (November 16, 2008), “Full text of Lee’s keynote speech at G-20 summit.”

⁷ *Agence France Presse* (December 6, 2008), “Switzerland wants seat at next G20 summit: minister.”

The British prime minister's office said that the meeting on April 2 would likely include just members of the G20, unlike the Washington talks, which offered seats to Spain and four international organizations. "I have spoken to the incoming U.S. administration and President-Elect Obama expects to come to Britain at that time."⁸ (November 26, 2008, *Associated Press Newswires*)

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev will take part in a G20 summit in London on April 2. "We welcome the decision to hold the summit not later than April 2009, as the leaders agreed at the first G20 summit, and in London, which was discussed at a meeting between Dmitry Medvedev and Gordon Brown in Washington," Russian sherpa Arkady Dvorkovich said. "The Russian president plans to take part in the summit."⁹ (November 26, 2008, *RIA Novosti*)

Egyptian finance minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali sought to quell a spat with Saudi Arabia, saying that the kingdom was a voice for the region in meetings of the G20. Last week Boutros-Ghali, asked whether he was satisfied with Saudi Arabia's presence at the G20 meetings, said: "I think representation should be through a country that understands the various issues being faced by a specific group of nations." He went on to say it would be preferable to be represented by "a state that shares the same issues as yours and that shares the ... challenges you are faced with." Boutros-Ghali's comments prompted a Saudi rebuke, with Saudi finance minister Ibrahim al-Assaf saying: "If there's a country that understands better than anyone the issue of developing nations, it's Saudi Arabia." "Traditionally we have always reflected the interest and the concerns of developing nations in general and of Arab nations in particular." But in a statement later on, Boutros-Ghali said his remarks had been misinterpreted and "affirmed that the presence of the Kingdom in the G20 guarantees that the voice of the Arab countries will be heard in this important international forum." He said that Saudi Arabia "completely understood" the problems of the Arab countries, and had contributed repeatedly in solving many of those problems.¹⁰ (November 26, 2008, *Reuters News*)

Prime minister Han Seung-soo says Korea should prepare itself to speak for emerging economies in the next G20 summit slated for April. He made the comment in an economic policy meeting, noting that President Lee Myung-bak received a positive response in the current G20 summit in Washington by urging emerging economies to help reform the world financial system.¹¹ (November 16, 2008, *KBS World News*)

⁸ *Associated Press Newswires* (November 26, 2008), "Britain to host G-20 meeting in April."

⁹ *RIA Novosti* (November 26, 2008), "Medvedev to take part in G20 summit in April."

¹⁰ *Reuters News* (November 26, 2008), "Egypt supports Saudi presence in G-20-minister."

¹¹ *KBS World News – English Edition* (November 16, 2008), "Korea to Represent Emerging Economies at G20."

4. Site and Preparations

Preparations

The largest economies in the world will embark on a new attempt to rescue the Doha round of World Trade Organization talks, in mid December. According to sources in Geneva and Brussels, WTO director general Pascal Lamy will soon publicly convene trade ministers to an informal meeting starting on December 12, with the hope of achieving a breakthrough in the multilateral talks launched in 2001 in Qatar. Following the call made by G20 leaders during the Washington Summit, on 15 November, senior officials from the key players of the round have stepped up their efforts in view of resurrecting the negotiations that collapsed last July. Revised compromise texts, reflecting some progress achieved since July, will be presented by the chairs of the WTO negotiating groups by the weekend. Although several players have sent positive signals, no breakthrough has been achieved on the most contentious issues, such as agriculture or industrial products. While the most optimistic believe that the financial crisis offers an unprecedented opportunity to conclude the round, countries such as India and France are likely to strongly stick to their positions. “We should not fool ourselves, however great the political and economic momentum, this is no done deal,” warned European Union trade commissioner Catherine Ashton, on December 2.¹² (December 4, 2008, *Europolitics*)

Doha Development Round trade negotiators will step up work for a new global pact following a call from the G20 summit in November. World Trade Organization director-general Pascal Lamy set a December 10 date for a mini-ministerial meeting in Geneva to seek a breakthrough. Leaders of the G20 agreed to approve the outlines of a new accord in the Doha round by the end of the year as part of efforts to deal with the financial crisis. At stake is a deal that could send a signal of confidence to businesses battered by the global credit crunch, by improving market access on goods and in services. A recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute said failure to complete the round could put more than \$1 trillion in world trade at risk. But significant challenges remain. Indian trade minister Kamal Nath said his country would not compromise on sensitive issues like farm safeguards. Faizel Ismail, who heads the South African WTO delegation, said developed countries would have to budge from what they were willing to offer and what they were demanding from emerging countries to secure a deal. “We are willing to work for it provided the developed countries translate the political signals in Washington into some concrete flexibilities,” Ismail said. But other developing countries were more confident that the outlines of a deal could be reached. Mexican WTO ambassador Fernando de Mateo y Venturini said there was an opportunity to clinch a deal and that he was optimistic that the modalities would be finalized by year end. The coming talks will focus on the core areas of farm and industrial goods. The outlines of a deal on services were completed in July although a deadline for final offers had not been agreed. Before the December 10 meeting, WTO mediators would need to update the negotiating texts they issued in July, as the basis for a deal.¹³ (December 1, 2008, *Business Day*)

¹² *Europolitics* (December 4, 2008), “Doha – Again.”

¹³ *Business Day* (December 1, 2008), “Trade Beat.”

Russia and Brazil will coordinate their efforts to tackle the international financial crisis, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev said. “We have agreed to coordinate our efforts both in overcoming the effects of the international financial crisis and in creating a modern international financial system,” Medvedev said after Russian-Brazilian high-level talks. At the talks the parties agreed that their countries’ finance ministers will discuss these issues in the near future and that both countries will make sure they have coordinated their positions by the time the G20 meet in London in April 2009, he said.¹⁴ (November 26, 2008, *Russia & CIS General Newswire*)

French president Nicolas Sarkozy went home after the November 14-15 G20 summit and announced that he would hold his own summit meeting in Paris on January 8-9, 2009, on the same topic. That has raised hackles in diplomatic circles, not just because the meeting appears to compete with a planned gathering of 20 world leaders next April. Sarkozy’s aggressive statements have put American officials on edge, with some saying that he seems determined to turn the global crisis into a referendum on the ills of untrammelled capitalism. Simon Johnson, a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, said that Sarkzy “said the U.S. had agreed to a whole range of negotiations on regulations. But he didn’t actually come in and negotiate any of these things.” Sarkozy said nothing about his plans to convene a meeting to U.S. president George Bush or the other leaders while he was here. French officials said the gathering is to be co-hosted by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and is merely a conference intended to bring together political leaders and prominent thinkers to discuss issues such as globalization and the values of capitalism. The timing has ruffled feathers, even more than its agenda has, because the G20 set out a detailed process to tackle regulatory reform. Sarkozy’s aides emphasized that the January “informal gathering” is not connected to the G20: “It’s a joint idea of Tony Blair and Nicolas Sarkozy; they have had it on their minds for a while,” said a French official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly. Sarkozy proposed the November 15 meeting, though Bush rejected his idea to hold the talks in New York. American officials said it was Bush’s idea to expand the guest list to 20 countries, rather than the usual gathering of 7 or 8.¹⁵ (November 20, 2008, *The New York Times*)

French president Nicolas Sarkozy and former British prime minister Tony Blair will host a meeting in Paris in January to look at concrete ways to respond to the economic crisis, the French presidency said. The meeting on January 8 and 9, 2009, will be held ahead of a second G20 meeting scheduled for early next year in London to agree on a response to the finance crisis that has since spilled over into the broader economy. “This is a crucial period for our economies and our social organisations,” Sarkozy said. “Now more than ever, we need to show that we can propose concrete solutions to the challenges that we are facing.” Blair said the conference, to be called “A New World: Values, Development and Regulation,” would make a vital contribution to efforts to come to grips with the economic downturn. The G20 leaders agreed at a summit in Washington in November to

¹⁴ *Russia & CIS General Newswire* (November 26, 2008), “Russia, Brazil will coordinate positions ahead of next G20 summit – Medvedev.”

¹⁵ *The New York Times* (November 20, 2008), “Sarkozy’s Fiscal Meeting Raises Diplomatic Hackles.”

join forces to galvanize growth and overhaul the world's financial architecture.¹⁶ (November 20, 2008, *Agence France Presse*)

Site

British prime minister Gordon Brown confirmed on November 26, 2008, that the United Kingdom will chair the second G20 financial summit in 2009. "I can tell the House today that we've agreed with our international partners, and particularly with Japan, which is current president of the G8, and Premier Aso, that the next meeting of the G20 will be held in London. It will be held in London on 2 April. It will deal with the major questions of economic action that are necessary," Brown said to the British parliament. Brown also confirmed that president-elect of the United States, Barack Obama, is expected to attend the summit following his inauguration in January.¹⁷ (November 26, 2008, *Number10*)

The next G20 financial summit will most likely take place in London, Russian presidential aide Arkady Dvorkovich said. A place for the summit and further anti-crisis policy steps must be determined before April 30 next year. Another contender to host the second anti-crisis summit is Japan, but London is the most probable, he said. When asked what steps Russia should take to implement the Washington summit decisions, Dvorkovich answered that no special decisions would be needed, but legislation correction would continue.¹⁸ (November 16, 2008, *ITAR-TASS World Service*)

British prime minister Gordon Brown said that the location of the next G20 summit would be revealed at a later date, declining to confirm London as the host city. "An announcement about location will come within the next 10 days," he said. He said Britain as chair of the G20 would "lead the way with Brazil and South Korea to form the agenda" for the next gathering scheduled before April 30, 2009. French president Nicolas Sarkozy proposed earlier that the next G20 summit be held in London. A senior U.S. official, who asked not to be named, said a number of countries had expressed interest in hosting the gathering. "The leaders did not have a discussion about the location of the next summit," said the official. "They agreed on when it would be held, it was not really discussed where it would be held." The official added: "But a number of countries expressed interest in hosting and those countries who have expressed an interest in hosting were talking among themselves to try and work out where the next one will be."¹⁹ (November 15, 2008, *Agence France Presse*)

¹⁶ *Agence France Presse* (November 20, 2008), "Sarkozy, Blair to host Paris meeting on world economy."

¹⁷ *Number10* (November 26, 2008), "UK to host G20 financial summit."

¹⁸ *ITAR-TASS World Service* (November 16, 2008), "Next G20 summit most likely to take place in London."

¹⁹ *Agence France Presse* (November 15, 2008), "Location for next summit to be announced shortly: Brown."

5. Expectations

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev hopes that the G20 will make concrete proposals on a reform of financial institutions by the next G20 summit in April 2009. “The plan, which we adopted, envisages the reconfiguration of the leading financial institutions,” he said. “I hope that these proposals will be made by our next meeting.” The current system of financial institutions “is not ideal,” Medvedev believes. “Some of them should certainly remain, it is certainly the International Monetary Fund,” he acknowledged. “However, almost all countries proceed from the fact that the IMF does not play that role, which it should have played in averting the crisis.”²⁰ (November 24, 2008, *ITAR-TASS World Service*)

6. Future Meetings

Speaking at a joint meeting of Italy’s parliamentary foreign committees, Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini said the G8 model “should enlarge itself in a flexible manner, involving economic and political players and coordinating with the G20 on economic and financial themes in order to have a complete spectrum” of analysis on global issues. The G20 countries are to meet on the third day of Italy’s 2009 G8 summit.²¹ (December 5, 2008, *Thai News Service*)

7. Other

U.S. treasury assistant secretary for international affairs Clay Lowery said the next president will have to weigh the importance of the G7 as a policy-making mechanism. Lowery’s comment came in the context of a question about why the G20 was recently used for a summit and not the G7 or G8. He said that group had been chosen for its breadth of economies and representation of nations. A meeting of G7 leaders would have been too limited, he said. At the same time, “there will be a lot of questions” for the next U.S. administration what should be done with the G7.²² (November 25, *Dow Jones Chinese Financial Wire*)

Indian finance minister P. Chidambaram said that the G20 will be the top economic forum for the future but he is concerned that no mechanism exists to oversee an economic action plan agreed by world leaders on November 15. The minister added it was not quite clear to India whether the incoming U.S. administration was wholly on board with what the George Bush team had agreed at the meeting. Therefore, a clear statement would be reassuring. “Otherwise, I think it’s a good beginning, we are happy, the emerging economies are happy,” he said. The minister expressed hope that President-Elect Barack Obama, who has a larger world-view than current president Bush, would be on board

²⁰ *ITAR-TASS World Service* (November 24, 2008), “Medvedev hopes for G-20 concrete offers on financial institutions reform.”

²¹ *Thai News Service* (December 5, 2008), “Italy: Italian FM voices G8 presidency priority next year.”

²² *Dow Jones Chinese Financial Wire* (November 25, 2008), “Next Administration to Mull Import Of G7.”

with the action plan. “The G20 has come to stay as the single most important forum to address the financial and economic issues of the world,” Chidambaram, said.²³ (November 19, 2008, *The Economic Times*)

²³ *The Economic Times* (November 19, 2008), “G-20 will be top economic forum: FM.”

8. Appendices

G20 Leaders' Experience

Country	Leader	Years in office	# of G8 summits attended	# of G20 summit attended
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	1 year, 5 months	0	1
Australia	Kevin Rudd	1 year, 5 months	1	1
Brazil	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva	6 years, 4 months	5	1
Canada	Stephen Harper	3 years, 4 months	3	1
China	Hu Jintao	6 years, 1 month	5	1
France	Nicolas Sarkozy	1 year, 11 months	2	1
Germany	Angela Merkel	3 years, 5 months	3	1
India	Manmohan Singh	4 years, 11 months	4	1
Indonesia	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	4 years, 6 months	1	1
Italy	Silvio Berlusconi	1 year ²⁴	11	1
Japan	Taro Aso	7 months	0	1
Korea	Lee Myung-bak	1 year, 2 months	1	1
Mexico	Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinjosa	2 years, 4 months	2	1
Russia	Dmitry Medvedev	11 months	1	1
Saudi Arabia	Adbullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud	3 years, 8 months	0	1
South Africa	Petrus Kgalema Motlanthe	7 months	0	1
Turkey	Abdulla Gül	1 year, 8 months	0	0
United Kingdom	Gordon Brown	1 year, 10 months	1	1
United States	Barack Obama	3 months	0	0
European Union	José Manuel Barroso	4 years, 5 months	4	1
Average		Approx. 2 years, 7 months	1.7	0.9

²⁴ Includes present term only. Berlusconi was also prime minister of Italy from 17 April 1994 to 17 January 1995 and from 11 June 2001 to 17 May 2006. He attended G7/8 summits in 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 as well as 2008 (which is indicated in the table above).

Members

G20 Leaders/Finance	Gleneagles Dialogue	Major Economies Meeting
Argentina	Australia	Australia
Australia	Brazil	Brazil
Brazil	Canada	Canada
Canada	China	China
China	France	France
France	Germany	Germany
Germany	India	India
India	Indonesia	Indonesia
Indonesia	Italy	Italy
Italy	Iran	Japan
Japan	Japan	Mexico
Mexico	Mexico	Russia
Russia	Nigeria	South Korea
Saudi Arabia	Poland	South Africa
South Africa	Russia	United Kingdom
South Korea	South Africa	United States
Turkey	Spain	European Union
United Kingdom	United Kingdom	
United States	United States	
European Union	European Union	

The managing director of the International Monetary Fund and the president of the World Bank also participate. The chairs of the International Monetary and Financial Committee and Development Committee of the IMF and World Bank also participate on an ex-officio basis.

G20 Leaders' Biographies

Argentina

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner became president of Argentina on December 10, 2007, after winning the general election. She replaced her husband, Néstor Kirchner, who was president from May 2003 to December 2007. She is Argentina's second female president, but the first to be elected. Prior to her current position, she was a senator for Buenos Aires province and Santa Cruz province. She was first elected to the Senate in 1995 and in 1997 to the Chamber of Deputies. In 2001 she won a seat in the Senate again. Born February 19, 1954, in La Plata, Buenos Aires, Kirchner studied law at the National University of La Plata.

Australia

Kevin M. Rudd became prime minister of Australia on December 3, 2007, replacing John Howard who had held the position since March 1996. Before entering into politics, Rudd worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs where he held posts in Stockholm, Sweden and China. He also spent time as a political staffer, and held positions that included chief of staff for the premier of Queensland and director general of the office of

the Queensland cabinet. Rudd first ran for office in 1996, but was not successfully elected until 1998. Since that time he has served in various positions including shadow minister of foreign affairs and leader of the opposition. He was born in Nambour, Queensland, on September 21, 1957. He received his degree in Asian studies from Australian National University where he focused on Chinese language and history. He is married to Thérèse Rein.

Brazil

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva first assumed the office of the president on January 1, 2003, after being successfully elected in October 2002. He was re-elected in October 2006, extending his term until January 2011. Lula first ran for office in 1982 in the state of Sao Paulo, but it was not until 1986 that he was first elected to Congress. He did not run for re-election in 1990 but became more involved in the Workers' Party, where he continued to run for the office of the president. He was born in Caetés, Pernambuco, Brazil, on October 27, 1945. He received no formal education and began working in a copper pressing factory at the age of 14. He became heavily involved in the workers unions at a young age. He is married to Marisa Leticia.

Canada

Stephen Harper was first elected prime minister of Canada in January 2006, replacing Paul Martin, and led a minority government until winning a second election and a stronger minority in October 2008. Before entering politics he served as a policy advisor to Reform Party. Harper first ran for a seat in 1988, but was not successfully elected to the House of Commons until 1993. He served as leader of the opposition for several years before becoming prime minister. He was born in Toronto, Ontario, on April 30, 1959. He began his academic studies at the University of Toronto and completed a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Calgary in 1985. In 1991, he received a master's in economics from the University of Calgary. He is married to Lauren Teskey Harper.

China

Hu Jintao has been president of the People's Republic of China since March 15, 2003, replacing Jiang Zemin who had held the position since 1989. He also currently serves as general secretary of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Central Committee and chair of the Central Military Commission (CMC). Before entering into politics Hu worked as an engineer. He joined the CPC in April 1964, and began working with the party in 1968. In 1992, he was elected member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central and re-elected in 1997. He became vice-president of China in March 1998 and vice-chair of the CMC in 1999. In 2002, Hu was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. He was born in Jiangyan, Jiangsu, China, on December 21, 1942. In 1965 he received his engineering degree from Tsinghua University. He is married to Lui Yongqing.

France

Nicolas Sarkozy became president of France on May 16, 2007, taking over from Jacques Chirac, who had held the position since 1995. France holds the presidency of the European Council from July 1 to December 31, 2008. Sarkozy worked as a lawyer while he pursued politics. From 1983 to 2002, he was mayor of Neuilly-sur-Seine. He has been president of the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) since 2004. During his time in parliament he held a number of cabinet portfolios including minister of state of economy, finance and industry, minister of the budget and minister of the interior. He was born in Paris on January 28, 1955. In 1978, he received his degree in law from the University of Paris. He is married to Carla Bruni.

Germany

Angela Merkel became chancellor of Germany on November 22, 2005, replacing Gerhard Schröder, who had been in power since 1998. She is the first female chancellor of Germany. Before entering into politics she worked as a researcher and physicist. Merkel was first elected to the Bundestag in 1990. She held the cabinet portfolios of women and youth minister and environment, nature conservation and nuclear safety minister. She was born in Hamburg, Germany, on July 17, 1956. In 1978, she received her doctorate in physics from the University of Leipzig. She has also received honorary doctorates from the University of Technology in Poland, Leipzig University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is married to Joachim Sauer.

India

Manmohan Singh became prime minister of India on May 22, 2004, replacing Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who held the position from 1998 to 2004 and in 1996. Before entering into politics, Singh worked as an economist, including for the International Monetary Fund. He was governor of the Reserve Bank of India from 1982 to 1985. He was first elected to the upper house of Indian parliament in 1995 and re-elected in 2001 and 2007. He held cabinet positions including minister of finance and minister for external affairs. He was born in Gah, Punjab (now known as Chakwal district, Pakistan), on September 26, 1932. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Punjab University in 1952 and 1954, an additional undergraduate degree from Cambridge University in 1957 and a PhD from Oxford University in 1962. He is married to Gursharan Kaur.

Indonesia

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono became president of Indonesia on October 20, 2004, replacing the incumbent Megawato Sukarnoputri. Before entering into politics, he served as a lecture and a military general. His first experience in politics came when he was appointed minister of mines and energy in 1999. He later served as coordinating minister for politics and security. He was born on September 9, 1949, in Pacitan, East Java. He

received his PhD in agricultural economics from the Bogor Institute of Agriculture in 2004. He is married to Kristiani Herawati.

Italy

Silvio Berlusconi was elected prime minister of Italy for the third time on April 29, 2008. He occupied the position previously from 1996 to 2001 and 1994 to 1995. Before entering into politics he worked in business, including construction, telecommunications and media. During his time in politics he has held a number of cabinet portfolios including minister of foreign affairs, minister of economy and finance, and minister of health. He is scheduled to chair the 2009 G8 Summit. Berlusconi was born in Milan, Italy, on September 29, 1936. In 1961, he received his degree in law from the University of Milan. He is married to Veronica Lario.

Japan

Taro Aso became prime minister of Japan on September 24, 2008, replacing Yasuo Fukuda, who had held the position since September 2007. Before entering into politics Aso worked in mining. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1979 and has been re-elected eight times. He served in a variety of positions in government including minister of foreign affairs and minister of international affairs and communications. He was born in Iizuka in Fukuoka prefecture on September 20, 1940. Aso studied politics and economics at Gakushuin University and went on to Stanford University and the London School of Economics. He was also a member of the Japanese shooting team that competed at the 1976 Olympics. He is married to Chikako Aso.

Korea

Lee Myung-bak became president on February 25, 2008, replacing Roh Moo-hyun, who had occupied the position since 2003. He worked in the business sector, moving up the ranks of Hyundai and becoming the youngest-ever chief executive officer before entering into politics. Lee was first elected into the Korean National assembly in 1992. He served as mayor of Seoul from 2002 to 2006. Lee was born in Kirano, Japan, on December 19, 1941. He received a degree in business administration from Korea University in 1965. Lee is married to Kim Yun-ok.

Mexico

Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa became president of Mexico on December 1, 2006, replacing Vicente Fox, who held the position since 2000. Calderón was president of the National Action Party's (PAN) youth movement in his early twenties. He served as a local representative in the legislative assembly in the federal chamber of deputies. In 1995 he ran for governor of Michoacán. He served as secretary of energy from 2003 to 2004. He was born in Morelia, Mexico, on August 18, 1962. He received his bachelor's

degree in law from Escuela Libre de Derecho in Mexico City and a master's degree in economics from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México as well as a master's in public administration from Harvard University. He is married to Margarita Zavala.

Russia

Dmitry Medvedev became president of Russia on May 7, 2008, replacing Vladimir Putin, whose term in office had expired. Before entering politics, he worked as a legal expert and a lawyer. He was officially endorsed as a candidate for the presidency on December 17, 2007, by Russia's largest political party, United Russia, and by then Putin as well. He served as deputy prime minister of Russia from 2005 to 2008. He was born in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) on September 14, 1965. He earned a degree in law in 1987 and a PhD in private law in 1990 from Leningrad State University. He is married to Svetlana Medvedeva.

Saudi Arabia

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud has been in power since August 1, 2005. He replaced Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, who had reigned since June 1982. Crown prince since 1987, he had previously acted as de facto regent and thus ruler of Saudi Arabia since January 1, 1996, when Fahd was debilitated by a stroke. He was formally enthroned on August 3, 2005. He also serves as prime minister of Saudi Arabia and commander of the National Guard. Abdullah is chair of the supreme economic council, president of the high council for petroleum and minerals, president of the King Abdulaziz centre for national dialogue, chair of the council of civil service and head of the military service council. He was born August 1, 1924, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He has a number of wives.

South Africa

Petrus Kgalema Motlanthe became president of South Africa on September 25, 2008, after the resignation of Thabo Mbeki, who had held the position since 1999. In the 1970s Motlanthe worked for Johannesburg's city council and served as secretary general of the National Union of Mineworkers. He became secretary general of the African National Congress in 1997 and elected deputy president in December 2007. He became a member of parliament in May 2008 and in July was appointed to cabinet without a portfolio. He was born on July 19, 1949, in Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa. He is married.

Turkey

Abdullah Gül became president of Turkey on August 28, 2007, replacing Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who had occupied the office since 2000. Before entering into politics Gül worked as a lecturer and for the Islamic Development Bank. He was first elected to Turkish parliament in 1991. From 2002 to 2003 he served as prime minister and from 2003 to

2007 as minister of foreign affairs. He was born on October 29, 1950, in Kayseri, Turkey. He received his PhD in economics from Istanbul University in 1983. He is married to Hayrünnisa Gül.

United Kingdom

Gordon Brown became prime minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on June 27, 2007, three days after becoming leader of the Labour Party. He was first elected to parliament in 1983 as representative for Dunfermline East. Since 2005 he has been the representative for Kircaldy and Cowdenbeath in Scotland. Before entering politics he worked as a lecturer and journalist. He served as chancellor of the exchequer from 1997 to 2007 and he accompanied Prime Minister Tony Blair to G8 summits as finance minister. He was born in Govan, Scotland, on February 20, 1951. He studied history at the University of Edinburgh and completed his PhD in 1982. He is married to Sarah Brown.

United States

Barack Obama became president-elect of the United States on November 4, 2008. Obama was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2005. he worked as a community organizer, a civil rights lawyer and a state legislator for Illinois. The first black president, he was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii, to a Kenyan father and American mother. He received his bachelor's degree from Columbia University in 1983 and a law degree from Harvard University in 1991. He is married to Michelle Obama. George W. Bush remains president until the inauguration of the new president on January 20, 2009.

European Union

José Manuel Barroso became president of the European Commission on November 23, 2004. Prior to that he was prime minister of Portugal from 2002 to 2004. Before entering into politics he worked as an academic. He graduated law from the University of Lisbon and has a master's in economics and social sciences from the University of Geneva. He received his PhD from Georgetown University in 1998. He also received an honorary degree from Liverpool University in 2008. He is married to Maria Margarida Pinto Ribeiro de Sousa Uva.