



Policy Brief

Accountability and Effectiveness at the G8 and G20

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G8 Research Group
G20 Research Group

On the eve of the G8 Muskoka Summit, the G8 Accountability Working Group will release an extensive report using a common systematic framework to assess the G8's progress in implementing 56 development-related commitments made since the 2005 Gleneagles Summit. The report will include recommendations for better implementation and improved use of resources. This follows Canada's commitment to make accountability a "defining feature" of both the June G8 and G20 summits.

According to Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, the "G8 is an institution with a proven record of moving agendas forward, of drawing attention to overlooked issues and ... of being able to mobilise resources to meet global challenges."

However, many are concerned that some G8 members are not living up to their promises. At the Italian-hosted 2009 L'Aquila Summit, G8 members pledged that they were "determined to fully take on [their] responsibilities ... committed to implementing [their] decisions, and to adopting a full and comprehensive accountability mechanism by 2010 to monitor progress and strengthen the effectiveness of [their] actions." This followed an internal recognition that some, such as Italy and Russia, were falling behind on their pledges.

In a letter in March 2010, the leaders of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Korea and France (the past, current and future chairs of the G20) emphasized the importance of meeting their G20 "commitments to ensure strong macroeconomic policy cooperation" and "regulatory reform to strengthen the international financial system." The G20 has yet to prove its value in the international system. If countries do not keep their promises, it could threaten the future survival of the institution.

Accountability was emphasized at the 2008 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit when the G8 released its first accountability report on anti-corruption. At the L'Aquila Summit, after releasing reports on a few issues, the G8 asked experts to assess progress on reaching development and development-related goals.

The G8 and G20 have placed accountability firmly on their agendas for when they meet at Muskoka and Toronto on June 25-26 and 26-27 respectively. In their letter, the G20 chairs concluded that "now is the time for the Leaders of the G20 both to recommit themselves and deliver on the ambitious reform objectives and agenda we have already agreed to and to explore cooperative approaches to meeting our common goals. We all know that an agreement to act is just a start. It is acting on the agreement that matters. We are all accountable."

Furthermore, in April G8 development ministers stated that "it is more important than ever to pay what they pledge on time and to shift the focus from inputs to sustainable outcomes." At the Canadian summits, leaders will build on these foundations to strengthen accountability and effectiveness. The G8's accountability report will show that not all countries have kept their commitments, but significant progress has been made. The G20 will have less concrete information to report in Toronto, and may have to wait until November in Seoul to signal whether it is committed and accountable to keeping its pledges.

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