



Policy Brief

## The Group of Eight

June 11, 2010

G8 Research Group

The 36th G8 summit, taking place in Muskoka, Canada, on June 25-26, 2010, will strengthen governance both within itself and in its relationship with the new G20. At Muskoka, the world's most powerful leaders will have frank, face-to-face intimate discussions, backed by deeply shared values, to deal with critical global issues in the domains of development and security. For the first time, the G8 summit will occur in tandem with the summit of the G20 in Toronto on June 26-27.

In March 2010, Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper stated that “the G8 remains the principal forum for advancing our common agenda of peace and security, as well as democracy and development. This is critical work. Indeed, progress made on economic issues at the G20 table risks being undone if the world's pressing security and development concerns are not addressed with equal vigour.”

Today's G8 first met in 1975 as the Group of Six, with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Its initial mission was to govern economic and related issues, based on their shared values and responsibilities to protect open democracy, individual liberty and social advance around the world. In 1976, at the urging of Henry Kissinger, Canada was added. Russia became a full member in 1998. Over the next three decades, the G8's agenda grew to include a wide range of issues, including energy, trade, food security, health, water and sanitation, and security in old and new forms. It is now in transition to focus on development and security and any crisis that demands attention when the leaders meet.

At Muskoka, the G8 leaders will be joined by the leaders of Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Colombia, Haiti and Jamaica. The G8 will deal with the development and political-security agendas and will aim for ambitious achievements in each. Under development, the priority at Muskoka will be maternal, newborn and children's health, accompanied by food security and nutrition, research and innovation for development, natural disasters such as Haiti and adaptation to climate change. Under political-security, the issues will include North Korea, Iran, nuclear non-proliferation more generally, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and security vulnerabilities in the areas of terrorism, crime and piracy. The leaders will renew their commitment to the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, established at the last Canadian-hosted summit in 2002. They will also discuss ways to improve accountability, in response to the first report of the G8 Accountability Working Group, which will be released a few days before the summit.

France holds the presidency of the G8 as well as the G20 in 2011. The two summits will likely be held at different times to maintain their distinct agendas and aims. If the G8 hosting order follows the precedent set over the past 36 years, U.S. president Barack Obama will host the 2012 G8 summit before facing re-election, similar to his predecessor George W. Bush in 2004.

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