

FORUM INTERNATIONAL DE MONTREAL

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE G8

Montréal & Ottawa, Canada
May 21-23, 2002

(June 13, 2002)

➤ **BACKGROUND**

Following discussions with The Ford Foundation near the end of 2001, the Montréal International Forum (FIM) Board of Directors agreed to undertake a project with the objective of helping to develop dialogue between global civil society and the G8. FIM is a global alliance of individuals and organizations with the goal of improving the influence of international civil society on the United Nations and the multilateral system. By statute, the majority of FIM Board members are from the South.

In approving the project, the FIM Board identified four conditions: 1) FIM would not present itself as a gatekeeper of global civil society; 2) FIM would concentrate on the means of improving the process of dialogue between civil society and the G8. (It was recognized that other bodies are better equipped to discuss the content of this year's G8 meeting.); 3) FIM would deal only with global issues affecting civil society and the G8, and would not deal with issues specific to Canada, the host G8 country in 2002; 4) In opening up dialogue with the G8, FIM did not wish, in any manner, to confer legitimacy upon the G8 as a global governance mechanism.

It was understood that changing the consultative patterns between civil society and the G8 is a long-term process.

➤ **PARTICIPANTS**

FIM invited fifteen participants from around the world. The objective was to have a majority of participants from the South, and to strive for gender and regional balance. Participants were invited in their personal capacity and on the basis of their knowledge of and experience with international civil society dealings with multilateral bodies. In spite of a tight time frame and the delicate nature of the project, the response by invitees was enthusiastic.

➤ **PREPARATIONS**

It took approximately three months of negotiations between FIM and the host government in order to achieve a working agreement. Issues such as the length of the meeting, its location and timing, the relation between process and content, the accessibility of the G8 Sherpas, the agenda,

expected outcomes, underlying conditions from both sides, and follow up possibilities were discussed and agreed upon.

The agreements were, in fact tripartite; amongst FIM, the host government and The Ford Foundation. Contact with potential participants had to be developed before a final agreement was in place.

➤ **DISCUSSION IN PREPARATORY MONTRÉAL MEETING**

The 15 civil society participants (see list of names) met for 2 full days on May 21st & 22nd in Montréal, in preparation for the meeting with the G8 representatives. Presentations were given by both participants and outside experts on 1) the history of multi-stakeholder dialogues, 2) an insider's view of the G8 from a former Sherpa, and 3) African perspectives on the NEPAD experience, with special attention given to the role to date of African civil society.

In the ensuing discussion, considerable attention was paid to the danger of allowing the G8 to use meetings with civil society as a means of establishing a long-term G8/civil society agenda and, therefore, strengthening their own (G8) legitimacy.

It was agreed that process and content are both part of the same spectrum, and that while process was the priority, it could not be totally divorced from content. In this regard, it was agreed that NEPAD presented an important example of how the quality of the content will be adversely affected by a poor process of consultation beforehand. Ultimately, therefore it was decided to discuss the NEPAD experience with the G8 representatives.

It was agreed that there were several precedents in multi stakeholder dialogues that could provide important lessons for any form of consultation between civil society and the G8.

It was agreed that no long-term objectives by FIM, and/or other possible organizations, could be identified until the first meeting was concluded.

It was recognized that the planning process for Kananaskis was well advanced and that civil society input could be more viable and effective leading into the 2003 meeting in France. Nevertheless, it was agreed to ask that African civil society representatives be invited by the G8 and/or the host government to meet with the five African Heads of State invited to Kananaskis.

➤ **OTTAWA MEETING**

The Ottawa meeting was held on the afternoon of May 23rd 2002. The G8 was represented by the Canadian host Sherpa to the G8 (see list of names), the French Ambassador to Canada and a colleague, the British High Commissioner to Canada and two representatives from the Japanese Embassy to Canada. Ms. Betty Plewes, an independent consultant, chaired the meeting.

Following general introductory comments, civil society participants made three presentations, each of which was followed by one half hour discussion:

1. **The global democratic deficit and civil society engagements:** G8 is seen as an informal club with little accountability. This is leading to public apathy, cynicism and a widening

credibility gap between global governance structures and those being governed. The G8 consultative process is recent and inadequate.

2. **The NEPAD consultative process:** NEPAD does not have wide African support. It is not a one-time opportunity. It is seriously flawed, with a total lack of gender analysis, its underlying macroeconomic framework has been put into question, and its resource mobilization strategy may well be unworkable. The NEPAD process needs to be opened up.
3. **Future G8-CS dialogue, building upon multi-stakeholder experiences:** The underlying principles must be good governance, transparency and legitimacy. G8 cannot continue to hide from its constituents. There is a wealth of experience of dialogue between civil society and multilateral bodies. Several examples of previous engagement between civil society, the G7/8 and different multilateral organizations were presented.

The specific request presented was that the G8 host government facilitate a meeting between African civil society representatives and the five African Heads of State invited to Kananaskis.

➤ RESULTS

The G8 host made no concrete commitments. The request to meet with the African leaders was deemed best to be arranged directly between African civil society and the African leaders, but the request for facilitation by Canada was not denied outright.

The Canadian host Sherpa requested that all African civil society critiques of NEPAD be forwarded to his office to inform their own work for the G8 Action Plan for Africa.

A checklist of considerations in establishing an effective consultation process was presented to and accepted by the French.

There was a mutual agreement to have a Kananaskis post mortem meeting with civil society.

The French expressed their interest in consulting with civil society leading up to the 2003 G8.

➤ FOLLOW-UP

FIM has written a letter to the Canadian host Sherpa requesting official Canadian support in arranging a meeting between African civil society representatives and the invited African Heads of State. Follow-up continues.

This report will be widely circulated, with immediate attention paid to those civil society organizations in Canada and elsewhere that are preparing for this year's G8.

A detailed analysis of the entire process will be documented.

FIM will consider coordinating with members of French civil society in preparation for the 2003 G8 meetings in France.

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➤ **PARTICIPANTS**

1. Mr. Taoufik Ben Abdallah, Senegal
2. Mr. Roberto Bissio, Uruguay
3. Ms Sylvia Borren, The Netherlands
4. Ms Sonia Correa, Brazil
5. Ms Katy Diop, Senegal
6. Mr. Felix Dodds, UK
7. M. Jean-Pol Évrard, France
8. Ms Margarita Florez Alonzo, Colombia
9. Mr. Jim Garrison, USA
10. Mr. Mario Lavoie (FIM personnel), Canada
11. Ms Chantal Lizotte (FIM personnel), Canada
12. Mr. Nigel Martin, Canada
13. Mr. Ezra Mbogori, Zimbabwe
14. Mr. Michael Pearson (special resource person), Canada
15. Mr. Mark Ritchie, USA
16. Mr. Isagani Serrano, The Philippines
17. Mr. Gordon Smith (special resource person), Canada
18. Mr. Rajesh Tandon, India
19. Ms L. Muthoni Wanyeki, Kenya

➤ **GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES** (May 23rd, 2002 / Ottawa)

1. Ambassador Robert Fowler, Personal Representative of the Prime Minister for the G8 Summit and for Africa
2. Mr. Michael Martin, Director, G8 Summit Policy Office
3. Mr. Laurence Blandford, Deputy Director, G8 Summit Policy Office
4. Sir Andrew Burns, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom
5. Mr. Philippe Guelluy, Ambassador of France
6. Mr. Emmanuel Rousseau (Deuxième conseiller), Embassy of France
7. Mr. Horie, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Japan

➤ **CHAIR** (May 23rd, 2002 / Ottawa)

Ms. Betty Plewes, Canada