

The FIM G8 Project, 2002–2006

*A Case Analysis of a Project to Initiate
Civil Society Engagement with the G8*

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THE MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL FORUM (FIM)

The Montreal International Forum (FIM) was established in 1998 in Montreal as 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. FIM believes that the stated goals of the UN are beyond reasonable reproach and that the challenge of the FIM alliance is to assist meaningfully in bringing them to fruition.¹

FIM provides a neutral setting for an annual forum for reflection and active learning about the interaction between international civil society and the multilateral system. In so doing, the forum draws lessons from experiences in different sectors, regions, and multilateral institutions that can strengthen the voice and participation of civil society actors in the multilateral system.

BEGINNINGS OF THE FIM G8 PROJECT

This project is an excellent example of collaboration between a private funding foundation and a global civil society organization. The spark of the idea began within the Ford Foundation. Ford was concerned about the lack of public accountability of the G8 and inquired whether FIM, with its interest in multilateral democracy, would be interested in trying to open up a direct dialogue with the G8.

A memo was prepared for the FIM board of directors and the board discussed the proposal via teleconference. It was agreed that the proposal fell within the mission of FIM. The G8 is multilateral, even though it has no permanent secretariat and no institutional home. It was deemed essential that the voice of Southern civil society be heard within the G8. Although the G8 is almost a virtual structure, it does make real decisions that, when applied, have an important impact upon the South and upon those multilateral agencies whose policies and programs directly impact upon the South. Also, FIM could bring its neutral convening powers to the process. There were, however, substantial risks to embarking on this project.

Identifying and Managing Risks

Several risks were identified from the outset. The greatest concern was that FIM would isolate itself from the broader civil society community by appearing to be a spokesgroup for a broad CS constituency. This concern was twofold. First, there was a concern that, by our actions, we would appear to be a representative body. A second concern was that some of the G8 authorities would use FIM discussions to claim that broad-based consultation had taken place with international civil society.

There were additional risks. It was unclear whether sufficient consensus as to the value of the exercise could be achieved within civil society networks, including within FIM itself. There was also serious concern that, by beginning a formal dialogue with the G8, FIM would confer a greater legitimacy upon the G8 than was intended. Time constraints posed an additional risk. At the time of the FIM board discussions and ensuing decision to proceed, less than six months remained before the Kananaskis meetings. Given these time pressures, FIM might not have been able to achieve the required quality of analysis and discussion. It was also recognized that any proposal would have to satisfy the wishes of the Ford Foundation. Ford was the sole source of funding readily apparent at the time, and it was understood that changing the consultative patterns between civil society and the G8 would be a long-term process. Last but not least, it was recognized of course that the G8 authorities might reject the idea of such a dialogue outright.

To manage these risks it was essential that responsibility for approval of the process, for selection of the participants, and for strategic options be with the FIM board of directors. While concern was expressed within the board about the risks involved in proceeding, it was agreed that the G8 was perhaps the paramount multilateral body of global influence and that some form of dialogue with international civil society was essential. The board decided to approve the project subject to four important 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 a 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.

CS/G8 2002: KANANASKIS, CANADA

Context

The choice of site, agenda, content, and process of each G8 meeting is almost entirely the prerogative of the host head of state. The host sherpa plays the major role in administering all arrangements, but in a very real way the G8 remains personal to the head of state, and informal. The sherpa may or may not be a senior professional civil servant. In some cases, the sherpa is a trusted friend of the head of state. The same sherpa may be in place for several years or may be changed yearly. From a negotiating perspective this makes the G8 a moving target. In 2002 there were no precedents to be observed, nor was there any institutional memory that could give a legitimate series of benchmarks. Given this rather ephemeral structure, the accumulated experience within the FIM network of dealings with multilateral organizations had limited value.

All negotiations with host authorities were conducted with a secretariat set up within the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This secretariat, although having some semblance of permanence, was in reality shored up considerably to assume Canada's hosting responsibilities.

At the outset, expectations by FIM were high, if not downright naive. FIM hoped to be part of the G8 formal discussions, similar to the position that civil society actors play in other multilateral fora. Our original objective of meeting with the heads of state themselves was rejected out of hand. Senior bureaucrats pointed out somewhat petulantly that not even ministers of the host country had access to G8 discussions. Thus FIM embarked on a steep learning curve as it began to develop a strategy for engagement.

Orienting and Developing a Strategy for Engagement

Part of this learning curve was the realization that, while meeting heads of state was impossible, even a meeting with all the sherpas was highly unlikely.

For the Kananaskis meeting, the major hurdle in bringing together all sherpas was lack of time. Given the increasingly late date, this was an understandable limitation. As expectations quickly became more realistic, the FIM strategy for engagement took on a clearer focus.

FIM staff began to understand the G8 context through observation of some of the consultative sessions with representatives of Canadian civil society organized by the Canadian host sherpa. It was apparent from these observations that these were consultations in name only. The real exercise appeared to be to inform civil society about the G8 and its priorities and to sell the proposed Canadian agenda. Any embarrassing and/or critical questions were readily deflected. No real dialogue emerged, and the meetings were not structured to allow civil society participants to present any kind of coherent counter-agenda.

Given these observations FIM became convinced that it was essential that the host sherpa not be designated as host or chair of the proposed meeting. It was suggested, and accepted, that a mutually acceptable neutral chair be identified. It was also apparent that the selection by FIM of the civil society participants would be key to the meeting's success. Unfortunately, since agreement on the principle of the meeting itself occurred so late in the process, it was impossible to present names of participants to the G8 authorities until late in the process.

Choosing Civil Society Participants

FIM identified several basic principles and qualities for choosing civil society participants. First, it was important that participants attend in their individual capacity. However, it was also imperative that participants have strong networking experience and diplomatic skills. FIM felt that it was essential that the meeting be discreet in nature, that it be "behind closed doors," and that embarrassment on either side be avoided. Both parties had to leave the meeting judging that it had been a success and that it would be worthwhile to continue the exercise in the future.

It was inevitable that not all participants would have known each other in advance nor have collaborated together. Participants would have a relatively short period of time together. They would have to quickly agree upon the immediate and long-term objectives, identify and prioritize an agenda, and identify spokespeople. Thus it was essential to choose people with a well-developed capacity for teamwork.

FIM invited fifteen participants from around the world. The majority of participants came from the South, and there was strong gender and regional balance, although because of the attention being given to Africa, this continent was slightly overrepresented. Participants were invited in their personal capacity and on the basis of their knowledge of and experience with interna-

tional civil society dealings with multilateral bodies. In spite of a tight time-frame and the delicate nature of the project, the response from invitees was enthusiastic.

Negotiating Agreements with the Host Country

Canada agreed early on in the negotiations that the host sherpa would participate in the meeting, and from there a convenient date was established. FIM strongly requested that, irrespective of the lateness of the date, senior representatives from the other G8 members be invited and this was agreed to. The agreements were in fact tripartite, among FIM, the host government, and Ford Foundation. Contact with potential participants had to be developed before a final agreement was in place.

Within FIM 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.

Preparatory Meeting in Montreal

In preparation for the meeting with the G8 representatives, the fifteen civil society participants met in Montreal on May 21–22 for two full days of planning. Presentations were given by both participants and outside experts on the history of multi-stakeholder dialogues, an insider's view of the G8 from a former sherpa, and African perspectives on the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) experience. Special attention was given to the role of African civil society, and how that might influence NEPAD.

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 was an important example of how the quality of the content could be adversely affected by a poor process of consultation beforehand. Ultimately, therefore it was decided to discuss the NEPAD experience with the G8 representatives. The group was ready.

Ottawa 2002: The First Civil Society Engagement with G8 Officials

The first FIM-facilitated meeting was held in Ottawa on the afternoon of May 23, 2002. The G8 was represented by the Canadian host sherpa to the G8, the French ambassador to Canada and a colleague, the British High Commissioner to Canada and two representatives from the Japanese embassy to Canada. Betty Plewes, an independent Canadian consultant, chaired the meeting.

The meeting lasted three hours. Following general introductory comments, civil society participants made the three following presentations, each of which was followed by one half-hour discussion:

1. The global democratic deficit and civil society engagements: the G8 is seen as an informal club with little accountability. This leads 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: Although there was some satisfaction that the G8 was responding to NEPAD, there was concern that NEPAD was a top-down process that did not include inputs from African civil society. Participants felt that NEPAD did not have wide African support. It was not a one-time opportunity. It was 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 needed 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.

Finally, the CS group requested that the G8 host facilitate a meeting between African civil society representatives and the five African heads of state invited to Kananaskis.

Outcomes: CS/G8 2002

While the Canadian G8 host made no concrete commitments, there were several requests and agreements resulting from this first engagement. Some of these were followed through and some were not. The request to meet with the African leaders was deemed to be best arranged directly between African civil society and the African leaders, but the request for facilitation by Canada

was not denied outright. (FIM wrote 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. No meeting occurred.)

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.

There was a mutual agreement to have a Kananaskis post-mortem meeting with civil society. (Although FIM and the Canadian authorities agreed upon the value of a post-mortem, this never occurred. Immediately following Kananaskis there were significant changes within the Foreign Affairs' secretariat. This halted all momentum and made continuity difficult.)

Another outcome of this meeting was a checklist of considerations in establishing an effective CS/G8 consultation process. This was presented to, and accepted by, the French delegates. The French expressed their interest in consulting with civil society leading up to the 2003 G8. (Once the 2003 host sherpa was named and the new team well ensconced, Canada was very helpful in supporting FIM's efforts to organize a 2003 consultation, to be held in France shortly before the Evian G8. Similar support was also received from the UK and France itself, two of the participants of the 2002 meeting.)

Lessons Learned from CS/G8 2002

In spite of its fluid structure, the G8 is, for civil society activists, an unavoidable multilateral body. Global civil society is a major actor in global governance and had by 2002 developed sufficient diplomatic experience to exert influence. The time had come for collaborative initiatives, and these would take time and effective strategies. It was evident that a growing number of G8 countries (perhaps even then a majority) favoured improved dialogue with civil society. It was also confirmed that reaching an agreement on an improved and consistent model of CS/G8 dialogue would be a lengthy process.

Civil society efforts must be proactive in nature, and strategies must be applied throughout the year, beginning long before the official hosting responsibilities are transferred. (Host countries change officially on each January 1.) Civil society must try to influence the agenda setting well in advance of the meeting. Although the agenda is entirely the prerogative of the host head of state, it is inevitably influenced by the ongoing meetings of G8 Ministers, world events, perceived priorities of the host country, and carry-over issues.

While, in general, civil society expertise and political clout are highly appreciated, receptivity for ongoing dialogue is not universal and continues to vary depending upon the sentiments of both civil society representatives and governments of the host countries. Civil society leaders in the host country must

see the FIM dialogue as complementary, not contrary, to other civil society initiatives being undertaken globally and/or within the host country.

As preparations began for the 2003 G8 in Evian, France, it was agreed that civil society actions had to be coordinated with the G8 schedule. Civil society coordination had to be in place early enough to attempt to influence the setting of the agenda, normally completed less than six months prior to the actual meeting. From the outset, close co-operation between French and global civil society would be essential. A strategy began to form.

Once identified, all G8 sherpas must be contacted individually and collectively by civil society within and outside of the G8 countries. With the finalization of the agenda, global coordination by civil society would concentrate on two converging priorities: bringing their expertise to bear upon the content of the meeting and ensuring that there is a viable system of democratic consultation. Most important, and certainly a difficult challenge, was ensuring that all of this was accomplished in a way that did not further legitimize the G8 as a governance body. Given the divisive attitudes within CS as to the very existence of the G8, let alone its legitimacy on governance issues, any slippage on this objective would split civil society into weakened camps.

With this in mind, the Global Governance Conference (GO2) held in Montreal from October 13 to 16, 2002, entitled Civil Society and the Democratization of Global Governance, included a special session on the G8. This session served as an important occasion to bring together those civil society participants from France who were actively planning an engagement for 2003 and their global counterparts.

CS/G8 2003: EVIAN, FRANCE

Preparations

Preparations with the French government officials for the 2003 G8 went smoothly. The French had arrived in Ottawa in 2002 with a somewhat skeptical attitude but had rapidly seen the value of the direct and forthright dialogue between civil society actors and G8 officials within the office of the President of France.

There were two minor issues to be resolved before a meeting could be finalized. The French government wanted formal assurance from French CS organizers that this meeting would receive their support and, since they wanted to host the meeting at the Elysée (the official residence of the French president), they were opposed to the appointment of a neutral chair. On the first point, FIM undertook discussions with representatives of the two major French coalitions of NGO networks preparing for the G8, CRID (Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement) and Coopération-Sud, to

ensure that the FIM project would complement any national civil society efforts within France leading up to the G8. As a result of these discussions, when asked by the French officials whether our initiative would cause them any difficulties with their own civil society, FIM was able to confirm that we had their “official support.” On the second point both parties agreed that there would be no designated chair.

Coincidentally with FIM’s preparation for the 2003 meeting in Paris, the French coalition of international NGOs, Coordination-Sud, convened a meeting with some of its counterparts from the other G8 countries. This first meeting of what was known as The Platform Group included representatives from the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), InterAction of the USA, and BOND of the UK. Because of their broad-based membership, this grouping of umbrella NGOs brings a certain capacity to claim representivity of the NGO community within the G8 countries.

Elysée 2003: The Second CS/G8 Meeting

The 2003 CS/G8 meeting was held in the Elysée in May 2003, in a special global context. The war in Iraq had begun and relations between France and the USA were strained. The Americans had attempted to isolate the French in their opposition to the war. Perhaps as a result of this ambiance, French government officials indicated to FIM that France wanted to collaborate increasingly with global civil society.

For the second year running the only sherpa present was the host sherpa. In addition, there were senior ambassadorial representatives from the UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Russia. The Japanese ambassador to France attended, and there was no American representative.

At this meeting many substantive issues were discussed. CS participants raised issues based on a commitment to principles of democratic global governance and a strong belief in the need for G8 accountability to universal multilateral bodies, as well as to a wider grouping of nations and peoples, particularly in the South. Largely due to the Iraq war, global security was addressed as a major topic. Participants argued that: “A human security approach is needed because the ‘war on terrorism’ increases social and economic instability, impacts negatively on human rights, exacerbates local conflicts and monopolizes enormous resources that could otherwise be spent on human security priorities.”

Participants asserted that human security was best addressed through existing frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs address critical G8 agenda issues such as poverty, AIDS, and water. Responsibility of G8 countries supporting MDGs is critical, although the credibility of their commitments is still lacking. Urgent progress is needed on

funding different mechanisms simultaneously, such as: Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels, debt reduction, and a new international taxation scheme (they are meant to be additional to the MDGs). Economic and financial stability can be secured through opening G8 markets to products from the South (agriculture, notably), elimination of dumping, and reform of macroeconomic rules of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that limit social spending.

This was the second year of NEPAD discussions, and many pressing issues were raised. Participants observed that the NEPAD process is diffuse and that transparency is needed with respect to implementation steps, levels of disbursements, and interface mechanisms with civil society both at the regional and country levels. Peer review process should work both ways.

The African CSO participants observed that the responsive approach of G8 countries to NEPAD should also be applied to African demands with, among many areas mentioned, agriculture, where there is an urgent need to move beyond the moratorium on biotechnology (which is a good first step) to agreement on commodity prices, eliminating dumping, and opening G8 markets to Africa; HIV/AIDS, where there is a need for immediate and adequate commitments for the special fund; access to medicine, with, at a minimum, no backsliding on the Doha agreement; and ODA, which should not be used as a negotiation card by G8 countries in trade talks in Cancun.

Outcomes of Elysée Meeting: CS/G8 2003

As in Ottawa, participants continued to advance the advantages of democratic multilateralism and of “democratizing” the G8 process. In response to the crisis, and the systemic undermining of the multilateral system, G8 countries need to renew a clear commitment to a multipolar world and put its weight behind the UN system to reinforce multilateralism. On “democratizing” the G8 process and facilitating engagement with civil society, the following recommendations were made:

1. Make decisions more transparent through the use of communiqués;
2. Institute more informal and formal exchanges and timely releases throughout the year;
3. Approach demonstrations as a key democratic right of citizens, not as a security concern;
4. Make public the follow-up and implementation status of past G8 decisions;
5. Make public all steps in the twelve-month G8 cycle including the transition process;
6. Use and build on precedents and experiences for facilitating CS dialogue in other multilateral systems; and
7. Create space for briefing (before) and debriefing (after) with civil society.

Lessons Learned from CS/G8 2003

During preparations for the French meeting, it became obvious that the FIM initiative required support from the host civil society and, in particular, those elements of national French CS who were responsible for organizing parallel events. In fact the office of the French president insisted that such support be confirmed. This realization influenced future planning and has been an important component of planning since.

In some ways the 2003 dialogue was a love-in between the civil society participants and the host government. Given that the Americans were not present and that both CS and the French government were seriously opposed to the war in Iraq, the discussions were amicable and geared unexpectedly toward the war. Also, for the first time, it became apparent that the host government saw political advantage in being in solidarity (on selected issues) with key elements of international civil society. This tendency has since been maintained and, in some cases, intensified. The absence of American officials, however, brought a sense of unreality to the dialogue. CS participants realized that any serious agreement with G8 officials would require American buy-in.

CS/G8 2004: SEA ISLAND, THE UNITED STATES

2003 marked the second straight year that the USA had not participated in the dialogue with civil society. FIM entered into planning with American officials with a realistic assessment that the possibility of achieving their commitment was low. The FIM secretariat explored closely with senior American officials the possibility of a civil society dialogue prior to the 2004 G8 meetings in Sea Island. Since the FIM board was concerned from the outset that the Americans would not agree to a meeting, parallel negotiations with the British, the 2005 hosts, were also conducted.

Following several phone conversations, a face-to-face meeting was held in Washington with a career foreign affairs diplomat who had been seconded to the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC oversaw the 2004 G8, and this official reported directly to Condoleezza Rice, then head of the NSC. FIM received a sympathetic hearing to our proposal, but eventually the Americans recommended that we put all of our efforts into the UK G8. This was received as realistic, friendly, and helpful advice. Months later we learned that the American administration had decided that in 2004, there would be no “outreach,” because if there were, they would have to deal with the NGOs. Thus, with the G8 Project stalled, a backup plan and funding was needed to keep the project alive to 2005.

Backup Plan Rejected

Following the notification that there would be no dialogue with G8 officials, FIM submitted a backup plan for financial support to the Ford Foundation. This alternative plan had been in the original submission to Ford, included due to the possibility that a formal US meeting might not occur.

In lieu of a direct dialogue with G8 officials, FIM proposed a two-day meeting that would have two main objectives. First, the event would be a serious brainstorming occasion to finalize the concept of a permanent civil society mechanism of dialogue after the 2005 UK G8. This would be done with the intent of ensuring agreement with the UK to have this model agreed to by all G8 countries during their 2005 meeting. The second objective was to use the US 2004 meeting to ensure high-level media understanding of civil society's interest in the G8 process. In order to achieve these two objectives we aimed to convene a meeting close to the dates of the 2004 G8 and close to the G8 site. Ford rejected this proposal, convinced, they told us, that the clearly recalcitrant attitude of the American administration had irreparably damaged the process.

Although FIM had wanted to proceed with the standard G8 meeting in the US in 2004, we were not really disappointed about the US reaction. Given their absence from the first two meetings, it was doubtful that we could have begun to negotiate any kind of a permanent mechanism with them as hosts. This freed us up to begin negotiating with the British much sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

Of Special Note in 2004

Although American CS and international civil society activities were low-key in the 2004 G8 at Sea Island, there was an important CS initiative out of Africa. This led to the arrival of a delegation of African CS participants in the USA at the time of the G8 that concentrated on sensitizing the American public and media to the issue of NEPAD. Additionally, a second meeting of the Platform Group (first convened in France in 2003) was held in Washington in early 2004, and coalitions were present from all G8 countries with the exception of Russia. A similar meeting was planned for the UK at some time prior to the 2005 G8.

REFLECTIONS: FIM'S GROWING UNDERSTANDING OF THE G8

Up to 2004 the FIM experience had been very much a learning-on-the-job process. Some of the key factors that influenced our capacity to negotiate, as well as the means by which we do so, were learned through trial and error. Each G8 is the personal affair of the host head of state. He or she determines the agenda. The official G8 meeting is very private and is a meeting to which

normally powerful ministers seldom have direct access. The host head of state takes over the process on January 1 of the hosting year.

There is no permanent G8 secretariat. Every head of state names a sherpa as their official representative in the planning process. Each sherpa will have a small secretariat support team. Typically all eight sherpas meet several times a year. When it is time for a head of state to host the meeting, the secretariat in the host country can typically grow in size for a period of about eighteen to twenty-four months, this occurring therefore every eight years.

There are no automatically recurring agenda items. This was somewhat changed with the 2002 introduction of NEPAD and the subsequent naming of ongoing African personal representatives (APRs), who are still in place. Non-host heads of state are very sensitive about pressuring the host head of state regarding any perceived agenda priorities. However, the agenda is often altered at the last moment due to world events and/or the unavoidable influence of the US head of state. Nevertheless, it remains entirely the prerogative of the host head of state to decide whether any issue will continue to be on the agenda.

Time constraints remain a challenge. A host country assumes responsibility for the G8 in January. The host sherpa may be named at a still later date. The G8 meeting is in June. The final agenda is often decided upon close to the June date. This typical tight schedule increases the challenge for civil society to plan and react with care and knowledge.

Reality Check: Reflecting on the Original Expected Outcomes

The original intent of the Ford Foundation and FIM was to establish a permanent dialogue mechanism between international civil society and the G8. Following the Genoa tragedy at the 2001 G8, wherein an Italian protester was killed by Italian police, G8 governments acknowledged that there had to be some form of dialogue with civil society. In that respect, the FIM proposal was judged to be timely. It was an unspoken understanding that G8 governments wanted to diminish the perceived need for costly and often dangerous civil society demonstrations and that the FIM dialogue might help in that objective.

FIM's intent was to build an atmosphere where constructive and respectful dialogue would occur. Indeed, international civil society had within its ranks the knowledge, experience, and diplomatic skills required to contribute meaningfully to the G8 exercise. It was hoped that FIM would create a selection process of the CS participants that was transparent and included some form of accountability back to a broad CS constituency. It was assumed that, given the variety of issues that are dealt with by the G8, different areas of CS expertise would be tapped each year, according to the host agenda. One

important objective had also been to engage the Americans early enough so as to ensure a successful meeting in the US in 2004. With a permanent dialogue mechanism in place, FIM planned to retreat from the process after the 2005 meetings in the UK.

By the end of 2004, FIM had achieved only some of these objectives. It was generally agreed that we had generated constructive dialogue. On that basis, we were in a position to possibly have some increasing influence on G8 agendas and their content. We were however no closer to a permanent dialogue mechanism than when we started, nor had we implemented, nor even identified, a more transparent and accountable process. Furthermore, we had not succeeded in engaging the American administration. Given the 2004 political climate of the United States, it was difficult, if not impossible, to identify American civil society partners who supported strong multilateralism and at the same time had access and influence with the American administration. This had hampered our ability to engage the US in this project.

The G8 Platform Groups (which can claim some degree of representivity within their respective G8 countries) were still at an embryonic stage. The differences in institutional culture between the various coalitions are large and they were still getting to know each other. It was, and remains, clear that it will be a long time before they are able to implement any kind of significant joint efforts on the G8. Progress had been made however. The two host governments that, up to 2004, had collaborated with FIM were positive about their experience and had indicated their satisfaction with FIM and with the project methodology. A strong majority of G8 members were willing to support the FIM effort.

At the end of 2004, it appeared that the objective of creating a permanent dialogue mechanism was faulty. It appeared highly unlikely to occur. The principle of the host head of state being free to set the agenda is sacrosanct. It was not felt to be in the best interests of civil society to encourage any "institutionalization" of the G8. As difficult as it was to deal with such a "moving target," the possibility of encouraging, even indirectly, a permanent and inevitably powerful secretariat, was considered to be fraught with danger. FIM, or a replacement coordinating body, could aim for more transparency and broader involvement. It was not feasible however, to try to identify an organization or structure that represented, and was legally accountable to, international civil society. The potential of the Platform Groups to bring concentrated CS influence from within the G8 national constituencies would take several more years to come to fruition.

It was also critical to remember that the voice of Southern civil society is an important component for effective G8 agenda planning. It remained essential that this voice be channelled directly, rather than via Northern-

based representatives. Following the difficulties of 2004 and given the above reality check, the FIM board made the following recommendations in September 2004.

Board Recommendations for FIM

That FIM:

1. Maintain its commitment to the G8 project beyond 2005 and that this commitment respect the conditions as originally outlined by the FIM Board;
2. Seek alternate sources of funding for the project and in particular that FIM encourage the G8 governments themselves (or, if necessary, the host country) to finance the project annually;
3. Move the annual date of the joint meeting up to January of each year;
4. Try to ensure that the G8 participants are all at the sherpa level;
5. Broaden involvement from within Southern civil society;
6. Be more transparent and participatory in the selection process of CS participants;
7. Ensure expert-level input from civil society into specific agenda items that are judged as being of special import to Southern civil society; and
8. Continue to encourage official American participation in the project.

CS/G8 2005: GLENEAGLES, UK

Preparations

Discussions with senior G8 officials in the UK began in mid-2004. FIM had several preparatory talks with the key British officials responsible for organizing the 2005 G8. From the outset, the UK indicated a strong openness to dialogue with civil society. They had verified with the Canadian and French authorities the merit of the FIM approach and indicated that their commitment was solid. This was clearly the case from the outset and all the way through 2004–2005. They also made it clear from the beginning that no final decision regarding our proposal would be made until January 2005. In no manner did they want to appear to be sending a critical signal to the Americans during 2004, while the US was still the official G8 host. At the end of 2004, FIM also had several meetings with British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND), the umbrella body of UK NGOs and CS coordinator of G8 activities in 2005. The purpose of these meetings was to ensure a complementarity between the FIM approach and that of UK civil society.

UK authorities were much more advanced in their planning and identification of agenda issues than were the 2002–2004 hosts at a comparable point

in time. In general, the UK authorities seemed to be prepared to continue with the basic model that we had used beforehand. However, they recommended strongly that we advance our sherpa meeting to January, in order to increase our capacity to influence the final agenda.

In discussions with UK officials during the final planning meeting in 2004, they suggested that a representative from Chatham House join us at the meeting. Chatham House is an independent London-based think tank, with strong connections to the UK government. They had an interesting G8 project that the British proposed could integrate well with the FIM initiative. In that meeting it was agreed that FIM would retain responsibility for planning the sherpa meeting while Chatham House would be responsible for organizing some preparatory expert meetings on the two 2005 agenda topics, Africa and Global Warming. The UK government agreed to finance the dialogue. This was the first time that financing had come from within G8 circles. FIM had discussed the possibility of the dialogues being financed within G8 budgets and had some reservations about CS losing control of the process. In discussions with UK officials, we did examine the advantages of the dialogue being funded from a common G8 pot to be funded by all G8 members. This idea was rejected as being too unwieldy and contentious.

In a final phone call between FIM and UK officials, just before the financial allocation was finalized, the UK official suggested that their funds be transferred directly to Chatham House, since they were already receiving monies allocated to other G8 civil society preparations and that a single grant would simplify administrative procedures.

2004 was the first year in which FIM began to work in collaboration with other networks. Chatham House, in partnership with FIM and also the Green Globe Network, Climate Action Network, and LEAD International, convened a series of planning meetings. Both CSOs and G8 officials agreed to a neutral chair, Simon Upton, Chair, Sustainable Development Roundtable, OECD.

Preparatory Meetings: Africa and Climate Change

A series of meetings in preparation for the sherpa consultation was arranged in the days before 23 March. On 21 March two expert meetings were held, focusing on the Gleneagles Summit themes—Climate Change and Africa. These meetings allowed for broader stakeholder input into the sherpa meeting.

Sherpa Consultation CS/G8 2005: London, UK

In London on March 23, 2005, all G8 governments including five sherpas and the European Commission attended the CS/G8 meeting. This was an unprecedented turnout. Following is a brief resumé of the rich and compre-

hensive discussions that focused on our global interdependency, Africa, and climate change.

The Global Context

There was a sense of urgency in 2005. Important gatherings that year included Copenhagen and Beijing conferences, the MDGs, the Millennium summit, and the WTO. Leaders of G8 were expected to exercise leadership and to contribute to solutions of problems facing humanity as a whole, not just within the G8 countries. There was a growing interdependence of causes and of consequences of problems, demanding global actions based on strong multilateralism. Although civil society had participated in a growing number of commitments made in previous decades through treaties, conventions, and agreements, there was a sense of disillusionment with global leadership because of the lack of resources and political support required to deliver these commitments. Attention to issues of growth, development, poverty, environment, and security was fragmented, and there was a lack of comprehensive, integrated strategies and actions to address them.

Civil society participants expected the G8 individually and collectively to use its offices to move forward through local, national and global institutions and deliver existing and new commitments in response to these pressing issues. Strengthening consultations with civil society and stakeholder groups locally, nationally and globally can contribute to the delivery of commitments.

Africa

Concerns regarding Africa and NEPAD remained critical. NEPAD and G8's Action Plan for Africa was premised on mutual accountability. (The Action Plan for Africa was presented by the UK as a separate initiative from NEPAD, with the similar objective of supporting African development. With time, it was increasingly integrated with NEPAD.) African progress included the African Union's (AU) adoption of NEPAD as a development program, and the G8's progress included commitment to, and the monitoring and evaluation of, progress on G8's Action Plan for Africa. The Commission for Africa's Report was an indicator of how far both sides still had to go.²

Addressing the mutual accountability of CS and the G8 in recognizing the contribution of the arms trade to conflict in Africa, members of the G8 were asked to commit to a legally binding treaty on arms proliferation within the appropriate multilateral fora and increase the transparency of their extractive industry transnational corporations beyond voluntary codes of conduct.

CS representatives reiterated existing civil society recommendations for Africa including: 100 percent debt cancellation; delivery of existing debt relief measures without conditionalities beyond the promotion of inclusive

democracy; reaching agreement on modalities for enhanced debt relief measures pre-G8 2005 summit to enable progress on aid at the summit in Gleneagles. They welcomed the recommendations in the report of the Commission for Africa on increasing aid to Africa and proposed the immediate doubling of aid to Africa by all members of the G8 and the establishment of a date for meeting the Official Development Assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 percent GDP.

In addition, representatives requested that ODA be untied and that economic conditionality be dropped. It was also suggested that, within the appropriate multilateral fora, G8 members commit to an end to agricultural subsidies, an end to pushing for WTO compliance within the context of bilateral and other trade agreements, and an end to tariff escalation on African exports. Finally, CS urged a review of the functioning of the current link between the NEPAD leadership and the G8 African personal representatives (APRs) through the Africa Partners' Forum, with particular respect to the ability of civil society from Africa and the G8 to contribute to its deliberations (and, for example, through opening up reporting under the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the OECD directorate).

Climate Change

CS participants requested that the G8 members accept the outcome of the Hadley Centre conference *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*.³ This conference showed that the scale and urgency of climate change is much greater than previously thought. G8 countries committed to a multilateral approach to preventing climate change must move ahead toward strengthening the Kyoto protocol, with or without unanimous participation. It was recommended that domestic targets be set for renewable energy sources and that, within the G8 countries, a network of the agencies financing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects be created. CS views energy efficiency as the least-cost response to climate change, and the G8 members were urged to strengthen standards on vehicles, buildings, appliances, and equipment.

Finally it was recommended that G8 members mainstream climate change into development planning.

Lessons Learned: CS/G8 2005

The 2005 UK meetings marked an important watershed for this dialogue. For the first time, all G8 members participated. For the first time, the G8 host country financed the dialogue with CS. The CS approach moved considerably from its previous emphasis on process to dealing with the specific content proposed by the host head of state. For the first time, there was sufficient

planning time available for CS, including the necessary time to convene experts. Also for the first time, most of the preparation work was done by host civil society organizations (led by Chatham House) and the role of FIM was directly complementary to national CS initiatives. FIM expenses were covered within the general budget, which was administered by Chatham House.

Importantly however, Southern CS provided less leadership than before. In the African expert meeting, for example, only about five participants out of close to sixty were from Africa. At the same time, Northern participants dominated the preparations for climate change.

For the first time the CS participants used a divide-and-conquer strategy. When it became clear that there was agreement among seven G8 countries on the importance of global warming, the participants asked whether those seven countries would be prepared to act in unity without the engagement of the lone dissenting country. The host sherpa indicated with no ambiguity that such a choice was indeed possible.

CS/G8 2006: ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

The 2006 meetings between civil society and the G8 were handled quite differently than in previous years. From the outset, Russian president Vladimir Putin named a former parliamentarian and current human rights spokesperson, Ella Pamfilova, as chair of an NGO coalition. This coalition became responsible for what became known as Civil G8. A National Advisory Council and an International Advisory Council guided Civil G8. This latter body seemed to change in composition regularly, but included several Russian members. Two FIM board members were on this body.

From the outset, the Russian process was heavily financed by Russian private and governmental sources. Civil G8 covered all FIM out-of-pocket expenses. FIM was regularly consulted throughout the process, but communications remained fuzzy, perhaps in part due to language difficulties.

Preparation Meetings in Moscow

Following an unsuccessful effort by Civil G8 to formalize a common position on eight G8-related topics, including the three G8 official agenda items, a closed meeting was held in May between nineteen CS participants and all sherpas. Unlike in previous years, the CS participants spent very little time planning together (a total of about two hours in lieu of two days). As a result, the CS positions were not focused, and, for the first time, there was open disagreement among CS representatives in front of the sherpas. Without the required time to prepare, the quality and professionalism of the CS presenters varied considerably.

Following this meeting under the leadership of the National Advisory Council and benefiting from written comments from the international advisors, the CS participants continued to hone their position papers in preparation for a large July meeting in Moscow.

The July meeting involved about six hundred CS participants, including nearly five hundred from Russia. Southern involvement was scattered, but the African delegation was relatively strong. Sessions followed a format that was similar to all previous Civil G8 meetings. Participants were divided into eight working groups, each of which had the mandate to finalize a position paper in time for a meeting with Russian president Putin. The eight topics, including the three G8 agenda items (global energy security, education, and infectious diseases) as well as sustainable development, human rights, global security and CS, ecology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and business and society.

Meeting with the Russian President

Prior to meeting with Vladimir Putin, a full day was set aside for CS planning meetings. During these meetings the International Advisory Council met formally on two occasions. FIM and others fought hard and successfully to ensure that presentations to Mr. Putin were limited to three minutes each. We also insisted that each working group nominate its presenter, who would then rehearse the three-minute presentation in front of us. This was resisted at first (it was seen as somewhat paternalistic by the Russian members of the council), but after successfully airing different “cultural perspectives” on this approach it was adopted and utilized. Many participants expressed the view that this led to a successful and historic occasion.

The plenary with President Putin lasted about two hours. After each three-minute presentation, he responded at length. The thorny issue of impending legislation defining the legal context of Russian civil society was raised within the human rights presentation. Putin committed himself to ensuring that the legislation would not be abusive toward Russian civil society. His main concern was the intrusion of foreign NGOs into internal Russian politics. He expressed sympathy to the CS anti-nuclear position but indicated unequivocally that Russia would go nuclear. In other words, when Putin disagreed, he did so unambiguously. When he agreed, which he often did (especially on GMOs), it appeared to most participants that he was being equally straightforward.

The fact that a meeting with the host head of state took place prior to the actual G8 meeting encouraged participants to believe that some impact on the agenda content had been achieved.

Passing the Torch: Russia to Germany

In November 2006 there was a meeting designed to pass the Civil G8 torch on to Germany, the 2007 G8 host. A preliminary plan from the Germans had already been approved by the 2006 International Advisory Council. At this meeting it became clear that the German sherpa and G8 secretariat would come from the German Ministry of Economics. Historically this ministry was not favourably disposed to civil society, so the gains of 2002–2006 remained far from assured.

Reflections on CS/G8 2006

Civil G8 was an impressive process (lengthy as it was) of work over several months, through several drafts of position papers, which concluded in highly focused presentations to Putin. In an exciting and often frustrating way, this was democracy in action. Each issue was thoroughly and openly discussed. Some debates were hot and irreconcilable. However, out of this came some clear consensus on each issue, which could be shared with Putin (and/or other G8 leaders and their sherpas).⁴ Each was a hard-fought consensus, which had to be seriously considered by G8 organizers.

Lessons Learned CS/G8 2006

In many ways, Russia 2006 continued two important changes begun in the UK. Each change is a sign of success, but they have brought with them a new set of issues.

The first change is that the G8 host governments are increasingly committed to and engaged in this dialogue. This also means that they are committing funds, and to some extent, influencing the agenda and the process. In 2005, the UK government contributed about £250,000 and in 2006 Russian sources, including the government, probably contributed several million US. In each case the money was granted to a host national coordinating body and the CS process, including international engagement, became effectively the responsibility of this national mechanism, which also in each case, continued to consult with FIM.

In these two years it also meant that the host country's priorities strongly influenced, if not dominated, the CS debate and agenda. In 2005, British CS was working in a pre-election context and knew that the G8 would have an impact on whether Labour or the Conservatives were elected. This influenced the entire working relationship with the host government. 2006 was even more dramatic in some ways. Clearly, with the eyes of the world on the host country, the G8 was an occasion to consolidate and ensure the gains of Russian civil society within a newly emerging democracy. It is reasonable to conclude that this was, in fact, the major intent of Russian CS.

The second change is the increased national CS involvement. The increased interest of host G8 governments in formally dialoguing with CS is a clear indication that, on one important level, the FIM initiative has been a success. This is leading in turn to a rapidly increasing interest by a growing number of NGOs to become part of this process and/or to initiate parallel processes. We can only expect this trend to continue.

In 2006, for example, there was a parallel engagement by the IANGO (International Advocacy NGOs) group. This includes some of the larger international NGOs such as Greenpeace (the initiator), CIVICUS, and the World Wildlife Federation (WWF). Most of them are Northern based, although Social Watch is also an active participant in this informal grouping. They succeeded, with no prior discussion with the Civil G8 Advisory Council, in having their own meeting of twelve participants with Putin. Originally they had requested to meet with all G8 heads of state, but this was refused out of hand.

The broader engagement of CS with the G8 can only be welcomed. We can expect this type of interest to grow, not only among international NGOs but also among national NGOs within the G8 countries and especially within each year's host country. This progress however has brought a new set of issues related to the diminishing role of Southern CS.

From the outset of this project in 2002, FIM saw this exercise as an occasion for spokespersons from Southern Civil Society to bring their concerns directly to senior G8 officials. FIM has always felt that G8 governments have ample occasion for meeting CS representatives from within their own country. As well, it is relatively easy for host sherpas to visit with CS participants from other G8 countries at the same time as they visit their counterpart sherpas throughout the planning phase. The missing component in the growing G8 dialogues was Southern CS.

As G8 governments and host country NGOs have become more engaged, however, the numbers of Southern participants has decreased substantially. It is worth mentioning that of the sixty or so people at the year's final Civil G8 meeting in Russia in November, there was not one participant from the South. The closest was the representative from the London-based African Diaspora movement.

LOOKING FORWARD: FUTURE CS/G8 ENGAGEMENTS

FIM has now reached a point where it is possible to think of implementing a multi-functional process. The first function would be to try to influence the G8 agenda before it is finalized. Ideally, this would include a proactive position by CS in addition to reacting to topics proposed by the host government.

This would require some form of internal CS dialogue early in the calendar year.

Once the agenda is finalized, the second function would be to influence the content of the agenda. This would require expert analysis, keeping in mind that the primary agenda topics will probably change each year. It would also involve, similarly to this year's Civil G8 process, achieving some level of consensus throughout a growing portion of international CS.

A third function is a highly focused meeting with the sherpas. This could continue to be the prime responsibility of FIM and would be an occasion to ensure that the voice of Southern CS dominates. However, this is being increasingly encroached upon by civil society from within G8 countries, and we can expect increasing pressure from a growing number of INGOs.

FIM is well placed to continue to try to ensure strong Southern CS involvement. In some cases this will be an uphill battle, as many NGOs based in G8 countries believe themselves to be sufficiently empathetic and knowledgeable to play an effective intermediate role.

A fourth function is the systematic monitoring of G8 commitments. In 2006 the director of the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto was actively involved with the CS process. The Munk Centre at the University of Toronto has been monitoring G8 decisions for years and is considered to be the leading school of knowledge and intelligence on G8 matters. They are prepared to collaborate actively with CS in the future.⁵

FINAL ANALYSIS: REVISITING THE QUESTIONS OF LEGITIMACY AND REPRESENTIVITY

When FIM began its dialogue with G8 planning officials in 2002, our intention was to shepherd the process until a more representative body from within civil society could take over. The initial assumption was that the process would not be viewed as legitimate unless and until this happened. But how was this to happen? One of the tenets of representative democracy is that it must be the product of universal suffrage, but there is no civil society electorate. How could any organization bring to the table delegates representing the vastness and diversity of civil society around the world? The answer, we decided eventually, is that it can't, nor should it pretend to do so. In spite of this, FIM believes that the FIM/G8 dialogue still has legitimacy.

In retrospect it appears that there were three major constraints to this process of becoming representative and claiming legitimacy. One was very practical in nature; one was strategic. The third, a conceptual one, developed later out of the other two.

Practical Considerations

Due to financial constraints and also because we wanted to ensure a fully participatory dialogue, we were faced with an immediate practical constraint of how to achieve broad-based representation. We therefore decided, both internally and with G8 officials, to limit civil society participants to fifteen. FIM took great care to ensure regional and gender balance in these fifteen slots, while always respecting the FIM mandate to ensure that Southern participation dominated. But this of course was merely scratching the surface of the representation question. Even within these limits, there was no “suffrage”—these people were nominated by FIM, not selected by their own groups. Indeed it would have been impossible to ensure that every minority linguistic, lifestyle, religious, ethnic, and/or disadvantaged group was involved.

Given these inevitable constraints, and while never actually using the term, we sought other means of ensuring some degree of legitimacy. In addition to the two group selection criteria used, we also drew up a short list of individual selection criteria. We felt that we needed individuals who brought, through their experience and reputation, wide-scale credibility. We also sought people who had extensive experience in multilateral negotiations. Because of the delicate nature of the dialogue (the 2002 G8 came on the heels of the Genoa tragedy, and no one could predict whether Kananaskis would also be subject to large-scale violence), we looked for people who worked well in a team and who had proven diplomatic skills.

FIM’s niche is in civil society/multilateral relations and, as with all professional communities, the major players are by and large known to each other. We were reasonably confident from the outset that we could bring together a team that would have the required skills and also receive broad external moral support.

Strategic Considerations

While recognizing the importance of this dialogue, FIM was concerned that our entering into it could have two consequences we were anxious to avoid. First, it could imply that we recognized the G8 as a legitimate global governance mechanism. Secondly, the G8 might confer on us the status of representing international civil society, and as a result feel justified in claiming they had consulted with civil society. We therefore stated at the outset, in writing, that FIM was in no way a gatehouse for international civil society and that our entering into this dialogue did not mean that FIM recognized the G8 as a legitimate global governance mechanism. The G8 organizers accepted these terms.

Conceptual Evolution

We had both practical and strategic reasons for disclaiming representative status. But were the factors underlying these reasons specific to our situation or systemic? It began to seem to us that our particular difficulty was part of a larger whole. The more we disclaimed representivity and the less we aspired to be representative, the more we questioned the premise that representivity is an essential component of legitimacy, especially for a civil society organization. Legitimacy does not necessarily come from representivity.

In view of our concerns over representivity and legitimacy, this manoeuvre may seem odd, but since there was in any case no practical possibility that we could *be* truly representative, we were anxious that representative status should not be ascribed to us for purposes we disapproved of. But if the legitimacy of the FIM project was not rooted in any claim that we represented international civil society, what *was* it rooted in? A partial response is that it comes from “goodwill,” embodied in the tacit acceptance of the FIM G8 Project by civil society and G8 officials.

Tacit Acceptance, Representivity, Accountability, and Legitimacy

The French were sufficiently satisfied with the results of our discussions prior to Kananaskis in 2002 to decide to continue the process in 2003, and the British and Russians both strengthened the process. It became clear that by some means we had established credibility and, by extension, some degree of “legitimacy.” Although the Americans did not attend the 2002 and 2003 meetings, they participated with vigour in 2005 and 2006.

In our internal reviews after each meeting, the FIM Board also reiterated its commitment to continuing this difficult project, which we knew would take time to produce measurable results. For the first two years FIM limited its public reporting to a short resumé of proceedings on its website.⁶ In 2005 FIM collaborated with Chatham House in London, and the process was more visible than it had been previously. It also included a greater degree of outside consultation than before. This growing transparency reflected a greater security in the overall credibility of the exercise and a corresponding easing of tensions between civil society and G8 organizers. In Russia the process gathered even more visibility and inclusiveness.

If this process is not representative, how then *is* the process credible and how accountable are we? There is a parallel with the profit-making part of the private sector here. We are, in a very real way, dealing with market forces. “Goodwill” depends upon the nature and quality of the product or service in a way that is similar to that of a business enterprise. We provide a service and we have stakeholders. If we fail to deliver a service that is acceptable to our peers (our civil society stakeholders), we will be forced to

abandon the project. It wouldn't take long for G8 organizers to realize that our colleagues did not respect us and that they are not receiving credible advice and/or opinions.

Our view has changed, therefore, over the course of this initiative. At the outset, we assumed that it would be legitimate in the long term only if it became the responsibility of a representative civil society organization which, for the reasons outlined above, FIM could not and would not claim to be. But it became increasingly clear to us that any existing organization would have similar difficulties in making and substantiating such a claim. Does this fact limit the potential of civil society to play a vital role in global governance? We did not and do not believe so. Instead, and gradually, FIM has found other means to develop credibility and legitimacy for the process. The mutual agreement, by G8 organizers and FIM and its partners, to continue the process conveys credibility and legitimacy.

One of the many reasons civil society is participating more directly in governance issues is because of a growing frustration with current practices of representative democracy (the democratic deficit). It would be ironic if civil society strove in its turn to fill the representative vacuum. The FIM experience with the G8 suggests that this is neither practical nor strategic, nor based on sound thinking.

We expected criticism from within civil society. We have received some, the most vocal being from colleagues who held positions of responsibility within "representative bodies," usually umbrella groupings of NGOs. The criticisms were (and are) largely conceptual in nature, centring on our right to enter into a dialogue on behalf of civil society.

Surprisingly, there has been relatively little criticism about our decision to actually undertake dialogue with the G8. This seems to reflect a mature understanding and acceptance of the diversity of civil society, and the prevailing attitude might be summed up as: "We prefer to deal with the root problem and to protest the existence of the G8, but in the meantime hopefully you can mitigate the damage." To the best of our knowledge, no participants have been personally criticized for taking part in this exercise.

We receive suggestions for agenda priorities and we are sometimes seen as naive if we seriously expect to achieve any concrete results. At this stage, however, our objective remains basic: to demonstrate to G8 organizers the value of open and frank dialogue with international civil society. Every time the new host country decides to continue the exercise, we achieve that objective.

NOTES

- 1 This Mission Statement, as well as most of the references that follow in this text, are taken from internal FIM documents, most of which are accessible on the FIM website. In some cases I have referred to Board notes, which although not confidential are not public documents, and on other occasions I have referred to briefing notes that I prepared for either the FIM Board or the FIM Executive Committee. On occasion I also refer to the content of discussions (as I best recall and/or noted them) with various senior G8 officials from different G8 member states. In most cases these officials were not speaking in their personal capacity but officially on behalf of their government, either on or off the record.
- 2 The Commission for Africa's Report is available at www.commissionforafrica.org.
- 3 See www.stabilisation2005.com.
- 4 See "International NGOs' Address to President Vladimir Putin," http://en.g8russia/ru/page_work/21.html.
- 5 See www.g7.utoronto.ca.
- 6 See www.fimcivilsociety.org.