



GROUP OF FIFTEEN

Committee Guide

By John Wilson

Introduction

Welcome to the Group of Fifteen! Established in 1989, the G15 hosts summits to address issues of great concern to **developing countries**, including trade, technology, and healthcare, as well as more overarching concerns like economics and security. The eighteen member states of the G15 are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. The G15's members include four sub-Saharan nations, six Latin American nations, three Middle Eastern nations, four Southeast Asian nations, and one Caribbean nation, and together they are broadly representative of most of the developing world.

The G15 aims to address important issues that pertain to its membership and to provide international organizations like the United Nations and the Group of Eight (G8) with a unified message representative of developing nations. As a counterpart to the G15, the G8 is composed of **developed countries** from North America, Europe, and East Asia. Both of these committees will be present at HMCE 2009, and their focus on very different parts of the world will add a unique dynamic to the resolutions that are debated and passed. The G15 nations host summits almost every year, and their **foreign ministers** meet about twice a year. Working in pairs of two, students at HMCE 2009 will fill the roles of these foreign ministers in writing and debating international resolutions.

You will be tasked with representing your nation in this important international forum on various topics. Not only will you and the other delegates in the G15 work together to craft policy approaches to issues like agricultural trade and global climate change, but you will also be responsible for working with delegates in other committees that also represent your assigned nation. As representatives of the international **heads of state**, you will help coordinate your nation's message across a variety of global governing bodies and will work closely with other delegates at the conference to ensure that your country's message is heard and understood. This task will require substantial effort and effective diplomatic skills, but it ultimately promises to be deeply engaging and rewarding.

Developing country—*a country that has not reached high standards of economic performance, industrialization, social programs, and human rights protections for its citizens.*

Developed country—*a country with a developed economy and the systems in place to respect human rights and freedoms.*

Foreign minister—*a government official who helps form the nation's foreign policy; this is the role that HMCE delegates in the G15 will fill.*

Head of state—*the chief official in charge of a nation.*

History and Background

The G15 was born out of the Non-Aligned Movement, an international organization formed in 1955 whose members declared themselves neutral in the **Cold War** and declined to align with either the West or the Soviet Union. Mostly composed of developing nations, the goal of the Non-Alignment Movement is to safeguard the independence and sovereignty of nations that refused to align themselves with a more powerful nation. However, the group was characterized by disagreements and **dysfunction** since some members, like Cuba, took sides in the Cold War and other members, like India and Pakistan, engaged in open warfare.

The Group of Fifteen was established in 1989 at the ninth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. It currently consists of eighteen members and is headed by Iran, which assumed its leadership in 2006. The G15 deals extensively with issues of development and trade, issues that it pushes aggressively to the world's industrial nations. However, it also dedicates much of its time to discussing how to improve the standard of living in the developing world, either through the improvement of health care, education, or any variety of methods. Security concerns are also repeatedly raised by the G15's membership. For example, in the previous G15 summit (2006), the topics included the **Millennium Development Goals**, food security, gender inequality in education, AIDs, agricultural tariffs, and many others.

At the Conference

All agreements in the G15 are reached by consensus, meaning that all nations involved must approve of any resolutions passed. By the end of the conference, the G15 will have produced a **communiqué** detailing how the member nations wish to address its topics of agricultural trade and global climate change; for this document to become official, it must be approved by all member nations. Therefore, substantial compromises and extensive negotiation must characterize G15 discussions. Without consensus, no progress can be made.

Additionally, G15 delegates will be tasked with working extensively with their nation's delegates in the other international committees at HMCE. This is especially true for the three nations that are also involved with the Group of Eight: Brazil, India, and Mexico. As direct representatives of your nations' heads of state, you are responsible for helping craft a coherent and consistent message for your nation across all of the international committees, not just your own. This can be achieved through HMCE's international summits, at which all delegates in international committees will be present; through country caucuses, in

Cold War—*the state of conflict and tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, along with their respective allies, from the 1940s through the 1990s.*

Dysfunction—*abnormal or unhealthy behavior or interaction within a group.*

Millennium Development Goals—*eight international development goals that over 200 nations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015; they include improving global development and reducing poverty and child mortality rates.*

Communiqué—*an official bulletin or communication.*

which all delegates representing the same nation will **convene** to discuss their priorities and progress; and through direct interaction with other delegates, both during and outside of committee time.

Convene—*to assemble; to come together.*

Preparing for the Conference

A thorough examination of the briefings will be your first step in preparing for the conference. The “Guide to Further Research” section in the briefings will also be very helpful when conducting your own research. After receiving your role assignment, you should also extensively research your particular country and its policies on agricultural trade and climate change, which are the two main topics the G15 will discuss this year. Research what legislation has been passed, and read any comments or speeches that have been made by relevant government officials, such as the president or the prime minister. Before the conference, you should consider solutions that your country would favor, bearing in mind the importance of building consensus with other member nations. It may also be helpful to look at some of the communiqués from previous G15 summits to gain some understanding of what your committee is expected to produce. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the HMCE Chair of the Group of Fifteen, Jason Burke, at jburke@fas.harvard.edu.

Conclusion

The two topics you will be considering – agricultural trade and climate change – affect populations in developing countries much more directly than those in developed nations. While in the U.S. higher food prices mean that people eat out in restaurants less often, in Africa higher food prices can result in widespread starvation. Similarly, the effects of climate change can be greatly magnified on those developing nations that are ill-equipped to deal with a warming world. As representatives of the nations most vulnerable to these threats, it is imperative that you are able to persuasively argue for your policies and work together to present a unified stance on these issues. With this year’s increased focus on cooperation among committees, delegates will have unprecedented opportunities to develop consensus, and we are excited for what will surely be an exciting and dynamic G15 committee at HMCE 2009!