



GROUP OF EIGHT Committee Guide

By John Wilson

Introduction

Welcome to the Group of Eight! The G8 includes representatives from the world's most industrialized countries – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – in addition to representatives from five of the world's fastest growing economies – Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa (these nations have been invited since 2005 and together comprise the G8+5, but for simplicity we will refer to the group as the G8). Each year, the G8 governments meet to address the important economic and political issues of the day. Students at HMCE 2009 will play the roles of diplomats representing governments in this **summit** forum.

Your responsibility will be to represent the opinions of your nation on these issues and to help prepare a comprehensive policy approach in conjunction with the other delegates that will lead your nation through the new millennium. At HMCE 2009, the G8 will focus on foreign aid and agricultural tariffs. These issues are **multifaceted**, and no country in the world is untouched by their effects. As leaders of the world's industrialized nations, you must resolve such problems through global strategy and cooperation. Your duty is challenging but promises to be rewarding as you work with your international counterparts to address these pressing issues.

Summit—*a conference of high-level officials.*

Multifaceted—*having many facets or aspects.*

History of the G8

The G8 began as the G6, which was founded in 1975 and consisted of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the United States. In 1977, Canada and the European Union joined the group to make it the G7. Though the EU participates in all discussions and is represented by both the president of the European Council and the president of the European Commission, it cannot chair a summit. The G7 became the G8 when Russia joined in 1998. The G8 nations meet at their annual summit to tackle issues important to all member nations. They aim to identify ways to achieve their common goals, combat common threats and problems, and coordinate policies. Since 2005, five industrialized nations (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa) have also been invited, and France and Germany have been pushing to make this change permanent.

These summits have dealt with issues like macroeconomic man-

agement, relations with developing countries, international trade, terrorism, and energy policy. From such fundamental issues, the summit agenda has broadened substantially to include microeconomic issues like **microcredit**, employment, and corruption; transnational issues like the environment, public health, crime, and drugs; and political and security issues, including human rights, arms control, and the crisis in Darfur. For example, by the end of the 2004 Sea Island Summit, located in the United States, the G8 had passed proposals on stopping polio, fighting corruption, and ending the cycle of famine in Africa.

Microcredit—the extension of very small loans to unemployed persons, to poor entrepreneurs and to others living in poverty who are not considered bankable.

The G8 at HMCE

All agreements in the G8 must be reached by consensus. In other words, all delegates must agree on a proposal in order for it to be adopted. The G8 will issue a **communiqué** at the close of the conference which must then be ratified by the heads of state of each country. At HMCE, the G8 will be run using modified parliamentary procedure. Since the G8 passes non-binding proposals by consensus, discussion avoids the politicized debate that often characterizes congressional committee sessions. Because the G8 is a body designed to benefit both the countries involved as well as the world in general, there should not be major battles over whose constituencies are hurt by whose proposals. You must be mindful during the conference of how to find common ground with other representatives in order to reach a consensus on the issues covered. The participation of all members is vital to the success of this committee; all delegates bear the responsibility of representing their nation while also crafting a suitable communiqué that will receive unanimous support.

Communiqué—a brief public notice issuing usually from an authoritative source.

In addition, G8 delegates must work extensively with their nation's delegates in the other international committees. As a direct representative of your nation's head-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 the new summits that HMCE will feature, through country caucuses (another addition to HMCE's programs), and through direct interaction with other delegates both during and outside of committee time.

Preparing for the Conference

A thorough reading of the briefings will be your first step in preparing for the conference. After receiving your role assignment, you should research your particular country and study its policies on foreign aid and agricultural tariffs. Research recently passed legislation, and read any comments or speeches that have been made by relevant gov-

ernment officials, such as the president or the prime minister. Before the conference, you should consider solutions that your country would favor, while bearing in mind the importance of building **consensus** with other member nations. You may want to prepare short statements as this will help you present your point of view at the beginning of committee.

Consensus—*general agreement; group unity.*

Conclusion

This year's issues – foreign aid and agricultural trade – are pressing issues in today's world. The way in which the developed world approaches foreign aid will dramatically affect millions of people across the globe. Specifically, the type of aid and the conditions under which it is offered will directly affect the world's poorest. Given the current global food crisis, the topic of agricultural trade could not be addressed at a more critical time. Because the policies of the industrialized world are largely responsible for the jump in food prices, the G8 nations are in a unique position to change the shape of the world's agricultural trade. Delegates will be making decisions that can change the way the world currently works. We look forward to what will surely be an exciting and productive G8 committee at HMCE 2009!