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Global Challenges | G8 Leaders Agree to \$60B To Help Fight Disease in Africa

[Jul 08, 2008]

Leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized nations on Tuesday at their summit in Hokkaido, Japan, agreed to spend \$60 billion over five years to fight diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa, [AFP/Google.com](#) reports. In a joint statement, G8 leaders set a timeframe of five years to meet the \$60 billion [target](#) made at last year's summit in Germany. The group also reconfirmed pledges made at its 2005 [summit](#) in Gleneagles, Scotland, to increase aid to Africa by \$25 billion by 2010. Leaders also set a goal of providing 100 million insecticide-treated nets to curb the spread of malaria in developing countries by the end of 2010 ([AFP/Google.com](#), 7/8).

However, some aid workers and nongovernmental organizations have expressed concern about the aid pledges and say that because the commitments are not legally binding and actual spending is hard to track, the donor countries may fail to meet their promises. In a statement, G8 leaders said, "We are firmly committed to working to fulfill our commitments." They also said that aid from the group and other donors should be reassessed and might need to be increased after 2010 (Nishikawa, [Reuters](#), 7/8).

According to [AFP/Google.com](#), G8 leaders said they would take "concrete steps" to fight HIV/AIDS, including through "sexual and reproductive health and voluntary family planning programs."

There was dispute among some leaders about setting a time frame for the commitments, [AFP/Google.com](#) reports. Britain had pushed for the most ambitious commitment of spending all \$60 billion within a few years, and Canada initially had hesitated on setting any time frame ([AFP/Google](#), 7/8).

During the talks, African leaders told G8 leaders that there is a need

to monitor "whether implementation was sufficient," according to Kazuo Kodama, press secretary of Japan's [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). Kodama added that the issue would likely continue for another year, until the next G8 summit in Italy (Moffett/McKinnon, *Wall Street Journal*, 7/8).

Max Lawson of [Oxfam](#) said the G8 "must not break this promise to the world and Africa," adding, "For rich countries, this is peanuts. For Africa, this is life and death" (*AP/International Herald Tribune*, 7/7). Charles Abani of the [Global Call to Action Against Poverty](#) said, "Promises are not being met. We are in a crisis. ... Families have to choose food or education, and food or health" (*Wall Street Journal*, 7/8). He added that one problem concerning pledges is that countries recycle them, announcing aid in one area such as education and then moving the same money to another area to meet new demands -- meaning the total amount of money promised does not increase.

"This whole business of announcing and reannouncing the same sums of money in different configurations ... seems to be a habit now," Abani said, calling for a mechanism "to get us to a point where we can work out when people are recommitting the same money that they've committed time and time again" (*AP/International Herald Tribune*, 7/7).

Newspapers React to G8 Summit

Several newspapers have published editorials and opinion pieces in response to the G8 summit. Summaries appear below.

Editorials

- [Newark Star-Ledger](#): The G8 does not "seem to be capable of much more than lofty pledges and talk," and the summit this year "promises to be more of the same," a *Star-Ledger* editorial says. It adds that "[e]ach year's G8 summit begins with a fanfare of promises and ends with a to-do list that everyone describes as urgent," including funding HIV/AIDS programs. However, pledges related to HIV/AIDS and other diseases have been "languishing without serious follow-up," the editorial says, adding that unless the G8 "makes some changes in the direction of greater inclusiveness and a more robust commitment to the issues it cares about, it will soon be no more than a gentlemen/gentlewomen's club, genteel and useless" (*Newark Star-Ledger*, 7/8).

- London's [Guardian](#): A draft [communique](#) that was scheduled to be issued at the G8 summit did not include some HIV/AIDS and other development targets, reflecting a "wilting resolve among G8 members to honor their commitments," a *Guardian* editorial says. The editorial adds that the "watered down" commitments made at Gleneagles will make "it ever more likely" that the [United Nations Millennium Development Goals](#) "will not be met." If G8 leaders "set their sights low enough, they should be able to cobble together a communique of nebulous assurances" and "non-binding commitments" to developing countries, the editorial says, adding, "But the real challenge facing the G8 is not to show solidarity, but to grasp that their interests and those of countries excluded from the

elite club are also intertwined" (*Guardian*, 7/6).

Opinion Piece

- William McGurn, *Wall Street Journal*: G8 meetings usually "follow a familiar script year after year," but this year's summit in Japan "may be the one in which we finally awake from the G8 version of 'Groundhog Day,'" columnist McGurn writes in an opinion piece. According to McGurn, the official G8 communique this year will include "something we have never seen before: country-by-country breakdowns of how well nations are living up to their G8 commitments," including pledges made to address diseases such as HIV/AIDS. He added that the "aim is to ensure that old promises are kept before new ones are made." McGurn writes that "[u]nder the old dynamic, summits were characterized by haggling over this or that sentence in a document that few ever read and even fewer had any intention of living up to." He added, "The new way should help shift the emphasis away from pie-in-the-sky promises (which are easy to make) to on-the-ground delivery of real results (which takes hard work and follow-through)" (McGurn, *Wall Street Journal*, 7/8).

UNAIDS, Kaiser Family Foundation Report Assesses Funding for HIV/AIDS by G8 Countries, Other Donors

"[International Assistance for HIV/AIDS and Global Health in the Developing World](#)," UNAIDS and the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#): The report analyzes the funding available for HIV/AIDS from the G8, the [European Commission](#) and other donor governments in 2007. According to the report, assistance for HIV/AIDS from donor governments to low- and middle-income countries is being driven by a subset of G8 members and some non-G8 members, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia and Ireland. In 2007, the U.S. was the largest HIV/AIDS donor, followed by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, using bilateral and multilateral channels (Kaiser Family Foundation release, 7/7).

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