

# Model G8 Youth Summit

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## Introduction

The Model G8 Youth Summit took place in Yokohama, Japan, and was organized by students from Keio University in Tokyo. About 80 students from the G8 countries, observer countries and organizers participated in the event.

The Model G8 Youth Summit is already the third summit of its kind. The first Model G8 Youth Summit was convened in April 2006 in St. Petersburg, Russia, during the Russian presidency of the Meeting of the Group of Eight Heads of State/Government (G8). The second Model G8 Youth Summit took place in Berlin, Germany, during the German presidency of the G8. The third G8 Youth Summit was organized in Japan because of the Japanese presidency of the G8.

## Organization

The Model G8 Youth Summit is organized by student volunteers from the host country with the help of national student teams in the other G8 countries. It receives support from public and private organisations, universities and government agencies, yet the complete format and content is decided upon by the students themselves.

The national teams are responsible for recruiting their national delegation to the summit, raising funds and establishing contacts to public and private sponsors. The host team is responsible for organizing the summit, accommodation, communication and preparation of the summit.

## Aim

The Model G8 Youth Summit wants to achieve three aims:

- Simulate as realistically as possible the negotiation process at the international level
- Generate innovative solutions based on realistic assumptions for the global challenges
- Raise awareness among students of the importance of the G8 Summit and the efforts of the ministers and government officials meeting at the G8 summit

## Participants

In the Model G8 Youth Summit, graduate and undergraduate student play the roles of government officials. The students are recruited from universities in the G8 countries (Japan, Italy, Canada, France, USA, UK, Russia, and Germany) or the O5 countries (Mexico, China, South-Africa, Brazil, and India).

A large majority of participants are citizens of the country they represent, but this is not a requirement. For instance the British Delegation in the last three years consisted of students from Germany, Colombia, Poland, and Portugal who were studying in the UK. This allows for a considerable diversity of participants and enables the participants to learn more about the perspectives of their host-country.

## Roles

A national delegation to Model G8 Youth Summit consists of eight participants: a Head of State/Head of Government, a Sherpa, and six Ministers. The Head of State/Head of Government leads the delegation and is responsible for the text of the Final Communiqué.

The ministerial positions are created according to the priorities the real Heads of State have for discussion at the G8. In the last three years Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Economics have always been present. The other three positions have varied including a Minister of Energy, Finance, Internal, Development, Environment, Social Affairs or Education, depending on the agenda of the real G8 process. Each round of ministers is responsible for drafting and agreeing upon a chapter within the Final Communiqué.

The Sherpa supports the Head of State and coordinates the negotiations between the ministers in cases where topics which fall under the responsibility of several different ministers.

## **Negotiation Process**

The negotiation process is divided into five stages:

- Preparation of national position: after the selection of the delegation by the national recruiting team, the delegation develops its own position on the topics prepared by the hosting team. Each minister researches his or her policy field and drafts a short position paper.
- Exchanging of position paper: the ministers of a specific field from the G8 countries contact each other before the summit, read each other's position papers and try to establish coalitions.
- Negotiation at the summit: the ministers meet at the summit; the minister from the host country leads the discussion and sets the agenda in accordance with the wishes of his ministerial colleagues.
- Drafting of the document: the ministers draft their chapter for the Final Communiqué. Consensus is the method of decision-making and no voting takes place. The draft chapters are given to the Heads of State.
- Finalization of the Communiqué: the Sherpas together with the Heads of State merge the chapters of the Final Communiqué and amend with some specific provisions of the Heads of State. At the Model G8 Youth Summit 2008, the Heads of State focus on a topic which was not addressed by a specific group of Ministers, in this case Climate Change.

Like the real G8, an important aspect of the negotiation process is the informal dialogue during breaks and social activities where Ministers can attempt to resolve conflicts.

## **The role of the observers**

At the Model G8 Youth Summits, students from non-G8 countries are also present. Two students normally play the role of the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council, if the Council Presidency is held by a non-G8 country in Europe.

In addition to that, the O5 countries of Mexico, India, China, South-Africa and Brazil each send two delegates, playing the role of Head of State and Sherpa from that country.

Both the European observers and the O5 observers are present in the discussions of the Heads of State, but do not participate in the Finalization of the Communiqué.

## **Unexpected Event**

Like the real G8 Summit, it is possible that during the summit a crisis occurs that needs to be addressed by the participants. At the Model G8 Youth Summit 2007 in Berlin, the unexpected event was the withdrawal of the Iranian government from the Non-Proliferation Treaty for Nuclear Weapons.

## **Feedback from Experts and Governments**

The Final Communiqué is distributed to government officials, experts from Think-Tanks and NGOs and to the media. In the past two years, these experts were also invited to comment on the Final Communiqué.

## **Social and Academic Program**

The Model G8 Youth Summit wants to foster the intercultural dialogue between participants and thus social and academic events feature on the program.

The delegations from the G8 countries visit the embassies of their country during the summit and discuss the negotiation process with experts at the embassies.

Also the Model G8 Youth Summit features an academic discussion on various issues, for instance at the Model G8 Youth Summit 2008 a discussion on Climate Change was part of the program.

Sightseeing tours and cultural events complement the program. Often participants extend their stay in the host country to get to know the country better.

## **Sponsoring**

In the past the Model G8 Youth Summit has been financially supported by universities, public organisations and private corporations, but none of them decided upon the format or the process of negotiation.

## **G8, Model G8, J8, G8 Youth Forum, Model UN, and Model G8 Network – what are the differences?**

The G8 summit has inspired many similar civil society initiatives. Before the G8 Summit in Hokaido in Japan 2008, besides the Model G8 Youth Summit, there will also be a G8 Academic Summit with Professors and Lecturers from various G8 Universities, the G8 Youth Forum and also the Junior 8 (J8).

### **The Model G8 and Model UN**

The Model G8 is similar to a Model United Nation (MUN) conference because people address current political problems. However, the rules for conducting a Model United Nations Conference are clearly defined and participants do not represent their own country, but a different one.

In the Model G8, the rules of negotiating are not as complex, but at the same time more fluid, just like in the real G8. Unlike a MUN, the participants represent their own country or the country in which they study.

### **The Model G8 and the G8 Process**

The Model G8 aims to simulate the G8 process as closely as possible. This is done by negotiation and reaching an agreement based on consensus, ministerial meetings that feed into the discussions of the Heads of State, and Sherpas which try to coordinate the negotiations.

Unlike the real G8, the participants of the Model G8 only have five days to conclude their discussions. In reality, the G8 countries are in a continuous and on-going discussion process with negotiations going on between officials in the administrations, ministers and Heads of State.

Just like the real G8 summit, the Model G8 provides the opportunity for people to meet informally and exchange their points of view. The challenge for the Model G8, however, is that the Final Communiqué is not prepared by the Sherpas before the summit, but is drafted in the on-going negotiations at the summit. In other words, the year-long negotiation process of the real G8 summit is condensed into a few days.

This changes the dynamics of the conference, because it requires discipline and stamina on behalf of the delegates. Just like the real G8, however the Model G8 informal negotiations can extend well into the night.

The Final Communiqué is often finalized in the early morning of the day of its presentation. In 2006 at St. Petersburg, the document was agreed in the evening after the ceremonial signing of the Final Communiqué.

The participants at the Model G8 cannot rely on an extensive bureaucracy to support their discussions with background-memos and policy briefs. They have to research their positions in advance and have to use that knowledge when negotiating at the summit.

In contrast to the real G8, the role of the observer countries is slightly enhanced. The observer countries participate fully in the negotiations; they are only excluded at the Final Stage of creating the document. The Model G8 has therefore started to implement the Heiligendamm Process of involving the O5 more closely.

Another difference can be seen in terms of Ministerial co-operation. In reality, the G7 Finance Ministers have often met without their Russian colleague participating. At the Model G8, the Russian Finance Minister was a full member of the delegation.

At the real G8, the most important discussion forum for the Foreign Ministers is not necessarily the meeting of the G8 Foreign Ministers, but it involves the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and smaller circles, like the Middle-East-Quartet. At the Model G8, all G8 countries participate fully in the Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting.

### **The Model G8 Network and the G8 Process**

The Model G8 Network consists of all former participants and organizers of the Model G8 Youth Summit. It aims to achieve consistency between the various Model G8 Youth Summits and support the hosting team with recruiting and fund-raising.

Just like the real G8 it is up to the host-team of organizers to decide upon the programme and format of the Model G8 Youth Summit. For instance the decision to include Education Ministers, Internal Ministers and Social Affairs Ministers at the Model G8 Youth Summit 2008 was made by the Japanese Organizing Team.

Just like the real G8, the host country has plenty of discretion in making changes to the summit. Those participating in the Model G8 Network have experienced how difficult it is to achieve consensus on some of the issues and how challenging communication across the continents can be.

Just like the real G8, the Model G8 Network has to acknowledge the different cultural backgrounds of its members and also different negotiation styles.

### **The Model G8 and the J8**

The J8 is a meeting of high-school students which takes place at the site of the real G8 summit. It is organized by a secretariat based at UNICEF and allows the Heads of State to exchange views with young people during the summit.

The Model G8 negotiation process is far more intense and more realistic than the J8 conferences. The Students contribute wider background knowledge of legal, economic, and political issues and thus the solutions they provide a far more realistic.

### **The Model G8 and the G8 Youth Forum**

Several NGOs are organizing a G8 Youth Forum before the G8 Summit in Hokaido. This G8 Youth Forum tries to voice the concerns of young people about climate change and other environmental issues.

The Model G8 also allows young people to have a voice in the policy-making process, but it does so based on a realistic assessment of the obstacles faced by the political leaders.

## **Lessons from the Model G8 Negotiations**

One of the most important aims of the Model G8 is to allow participants a glimpse into the real G8 negotiation process. This gives them a better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted discussions taking place on the current global problems.

### **Preparation**

When researching their countries official positions, the participants in the Model G8 have to conduct extensive background research. They not only have to understand the latest issues faced by real ministers, but also understand what conflicts have arisen in international relations on these issues.

### **Negotiation**

The G8 negotiations teach a debating style, where the aim is to reach consensus. In order to reach unanimous agreement, the discussions cannot be as adversarial national political debates and different debating tactics must be employed.

### **Agenda-Setting**

In the Model G8, it becomes evident that agenda-setting is an important part of the negotiation process. In some cases, the host ministers did not set an agenda compatible with the political positions of other governments. In this situation the participants learnt about the difficulty of altering an agenda without causing considerable political animosity.

### **Informal Negotiations**

An important part of the discussions are also the informal negotiations which take place in breaks and in the evenings and which are aimed at building consensus. A consensus needs to allow everybody to keep face – the head of the delegations vis-à-vis their ministers, and among the Heads of State. The Sherpas learn to orchestrate this informal negotiation process.

### **Discussion vs. Drafts**

A consensus is often reached in discussions, but when an attempt is made to formulate it on paper difficulties arise again. The haggling over individual words or sometimes even syllables can be quite frustrating. Even without having to consider the legal implications of international statements, finding the right formula in international documents is sometimes more difficult than agreeing in principal.

### **Reading between the lines**

Often conflicts which remain after the negotiations are concealed by certain diplomatic phrases. Model G8 participants learn to read between the lines of official documents and look for the signals which convey the underlying disputes.

They also learn how the content of a statement is watered down in the final drafting process where strong statements will be replaced by softer statements in order to gain consensus.

### **Feedback from the public**

Participants also learn that politicians are often criticized for not achieving mutually exclusive goals. For instance, the G8 is criticized for not being efficient enough but at the same not being representative enough. Participants learn that achieving a consensus is already difficult with eight participants and adding more countries does not necessarily improve the quality of the debate.

The public often does not appreciate the careful and delicate compromises made within the Final Communiqué. The Model G8 helps participant to understand why G8 Heads of State are so keen to give a display of unity to the media, given the difficulty of reaching decisive course of action in the Communiqué.