



## **The World Today**

### **A note on the G-8 Agenda- Climate Change**

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Next month (June), the German seaside town of Heiligendamm will host the 33rd edition of the Group of 8 (G-8) Summit. The G-8 summit will be attended by the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States. The two day summit has been organized under the theme of “Growth and Responsibility”. Its proposed eight point agenda for discussion tackles a wide range of issues ranging from climate change to Africa’s fight against the AIDS virus. Some observers believe that the agenda is an ambitious one and are quite dubious of the motives behind this agenda.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s announcement of the agenda of the G-8 Summit has once more sought to shed some much needed light on the development issues of the developing world. Developing countries have always paid close attention to the proceedings of the G-8 Summits and the 2007 meeting will be like any other. Developing and emerging countries will continue to look closely at the articulations of the world’s leaders to see where they could benefit.

The issue of climate change is one such issue that will be closely monitored by developing countries. At the meeting, it is hoped that the leaders of the industrialized countries will discuss the future of the fight against climate change and global warming after the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions expires in the year 2012. It is hoped that a new treaty governing emissions will be negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and will engage emerging industrialized countries such as Brazil, Mexico, China and India. The inclusion of climate change is timely as this issue has been hotly debated since the start of this year.

However, more needs to be done to address this issue. The negative effects of climate change and global warming has been discussed for the last 40 years. Many treaties and laws have been signed to help solve this issue or at least delay the effects of climate change. It would appear that none of these treaties have worked and thus it is time to look for new solutions.

The melting of the polar ice caps in the Arctic region and other global warming phenomenon has been signaled as a doomsday omen for the Small Island territories such as CARICOM. It has been argued that there will be other devastating effects such as the decrease quality of water resources, torrential rain, hotter weather, drought, sea level rise and warmer seas. The effects of global warming and climate change have been witnessed during the Atlantic hurricane season when huge powerful storms have developed for example Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Since then, more destructive hurricanes have developed such as Katrina and Wilma in 2005.

But, any talk of a new approach towards climate change should be done on a global scale. It is argued that climate change has a global reach but the people of the developing world seem to suffer the most. Just last April, the Security Council held its first ever Debate on the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security. While this may be viewed as a positive step towards combating climate change, some participating developing countries argued that the issue best fit the discussion table of the General Assembly where all UN member countries could provide some measure of input.

Likewise, it has been argued that the G-8 Summit may not be the best venue to discuss this global issue. The G-8 consists of those countries that are perceived as the major emitters of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Indeed, President of the United States, George W. Bush has yet to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. To this end, some observers have argued that the G-8 countries may not provide the best framework to solve this problem. In fact, a failure of the G-8 Summit to discuss the recent finding by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change that greenhouse gas emissions can be curbed at a reasonable cost may be considered another attempt to ignore the main contentions in the Climate Change divide.

With recent news reports highlighting the disappearance of islands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, it is imperative that the future debates on climate change are discussed at a global level. There is a need for a “long term global response” to address this issue as some emerging countries are at the cusp of overtaking the US as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases for instance China. In addition, the current debate on the greenhouse emissions by planes raises new concerns.

For developing small island states such as CARICOM, close attention must be paid to the discussion not only in G-8 and the UN but also the upcoming negotiations on the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol. Climate change will not only impact the future development discourse of Small Island Developing states but also the security of these countries. For the socio- economic development of any Island state would prove worthless if that island is devoured by the raising sea surrounding it.