



The G-20 Pittsburgh Summit: Reflections for People of Faith

Introduction

In June 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations announced that 1.02 billion people will experience acute hunger every day—an 11 percent increase over previous projections. Simply put, one out of every six human beings will go hungry every day this year. The spike in world hunger is the result of a two-year period of high food prices compounded by the global economic downturn. Other issues, from debt to climate change, are also driven by economic forces. (*To learn more about how these issues are interrelated, see Bread for the World Institute’s Hunger Report at www.hungerreport.org.*)

The September 24-25, 2009 Group of 20 (G-20) Summit in Pittsburgh presents a unique opportunity for U.S. religious leaders to raise our concern for the plight of the world’s hungry people. For several days, world attention will be focused on Pittsburgh, where the G-20 leaders will deliberate on the actions needed to assure a sustainable recovery from the global economic crisis. Faith leaders gathered there will remind G-20 representatives that any recovery must include the more than 1 billion people—including Americans—who now live in extreme poverty and hunger.

This resource offers background information on the G-20 Summit along with reflection activities. It is hoped that people of faith will be able to use these materials in the weeks before the summit to inform their prayers and actions around this historic meeting.

The Group of 20 (G-20)

The G-20 was established in 1999 to bring together major industrialized and developing countries to discuss key issues in the global economy. The G-20 countries account for approximately 90 percent of global gross national product and 80 percent of world trade, and represent two-thirds of the world’s population. Participants at the summit will be from:

Argentina	Germany	Saudi Arabia
Australia	India	South Africa
Brazil	Indonesia	South Korea
Canada	Italy	Turkey
China	Japan	United Kingdom
European Union	Mexico	United States
France	Russia	
<i>Ex-officio:</i>	<i>European Central Bank</i>	<i>World Bank</i>
	<i>International Monetary Fund</i>	

In announcing the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit last May, the White House said they will meet “to take stock of progress made since the most recent summits and discuss further actions to assure a sound and sustainable recovery from the global economic and financial crisis.”

The Road to Pittsburgh

G-20 leaders have held two summits since the onset of the global financial crisis in the fall of 2008. They have agreed to actions intended to prevent a further deterioration in the global economy, stabilize and reform financial markets, and lay the groundwork for a global recovery.

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In both G-20 summits (in Washington in November 2008 and in London in April 2009), leaders discussed the devastating impact of the global economic crisis on developing countries and the dramatic rise in hunger and poverty as a result. They agreed to a number of measures to assist developing countries through the crisis and put them back on the path to making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

For a scorecard on fulfillment on prior commitments see the UN Millennium Campaign Web site at www.endpoverty2015.org

G-20 leaders pledged to:

- Maintain their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals;
- Build “an inclusive, green and sustainable recovery”;
- Increase resources available to the International Monetary Fund and the multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, to support emerging markets and developing countries, and help restore global growth;
- Reform the governance structure of these international financial institutions, including voice and representation of developing countries and an open, transparent, merit-based selection process for the leadership and senior staff; and
- Refrain from new barriers to trade and complete the Doha Development Round¹ of trade negotiations.

(For an analysis of the G-20 London Summit, see Appendix 2.)

United Nations

Millennium Development Goals for 2015

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

The United States and 191 other United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations agreed to these goals in 2001. They aim to achieve these international development goals by 2015.

A Focus on Agriculture and Food Security

At the G-20 London Summit, President Barack Obama announced his administration’s plan to help farmers in developing countries increase their agricultural productivity, including a doubling of U.S. assistance for agriculture, as a response to the global food crisis.

At the Summit of the Group of 8 in L’Aquila, Italy, in June 2009, President Obama and leaders of the eight largest economies (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States) agreed to a \$20 billion Global Food Security Initiative.

To meet our share of the pledge, the president has requested \$1.4 billion in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget for programs that will boost smallholder agriculture in the developing countries. *(For a response from Bread for the World, see Appendix 3.)*

¹ The **Doha Development Round** or **Doha Development Agenda** is the current trade-negotiation round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). These meetings present an opportunity to change global trade policies, create a more level playing field for rich and poor nations alike, and improve the lives and livelihoods of poor farmers in developing countries.

What to Look for at the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit

- A review of progress made and discussion of further actions needed toward a sustainable recovery from the global economic and financial crisis
- A call for accountability. Many commitments have been made in support of the Millennium Development Goals on aid and trade in the past year, but also over the past several years. These commitments have not been followed by substantial action.
- Discussion of the Global Food Security Initiative, clarifying how much of the commitment is new funding and how the G-20 countries will coordinate efforts.
- Evaluation of the progress toward implementation of environment-related pledges and initiatives presented at previous G-20 summits. This is the last major summit before the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Dec. 7-18, 2009 where a new global climate treaty will be negotiated.

For talking points on the Pittsburgh Summit, see Appendix 1; for more G-20 talking points, see Appendix 4.



General Questions:

1. Looking at the commitments made by the G-20 and G-8, which ones stand out to you as most important? Most ambitious? Most surprising?
2. Consider the list of G-20 members. What countries or groups are not represented? How do you think their absence affects the group's decisions?

Reflections

Biblical Reflection: Sharing Abundance

Note: Jewish congregations might want to use the Scripture study in Session 5 of the Hunger No More curriculum found under the educational resources tab on www.mazon.org. Muslim congregations might want to use "Hunger and Poverty: An Islamic Perspective" found under the resources tab at www.oneworldweek.org.

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

In the mid-first century, famine spread throughout Judea. The Apostle Paul devoted much time and energy to gathering funds from Gentile churches in Asia Minor to share with those suffering in Judea. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul commends to them "boasting" only in "the generous act of Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (8:9).

Paul wasn't looking for a hand-out and the collection wasn't about charity. Rather, he urges "a fair balance between your present abundance and their need" (8:14). The "balancing" of resources starts with an awareness that the abundance is a gift from God. God blesses the world with abundance that can be allocated in a just and equitable way so all have enough, and none are in need.

This early famine relief program encourages us to take on the messy work of changing laws and policies. Paul's collection was a major undertaking, requiring efficient organization and large-scale cooperation. As you read 2 Corinthians, you can tell that fierce negotiations and less-than-perfect compromises were involved. As the G-20 take on the challenge of a sustainable economic recovery, Paul's words to the Corinthians give us boldness and confidence.



Questions for Reflection:

1. How does the Apostle Paul’s call for compassion and solidarity between churches across borders apply to borders between nations?
2. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set targets for reducing poverty, hunger and disease, lowering premature death rates, and increasing educational achievements around the world. In light of this Scripture, what might you say to the G-20 about the commitment of their nations to achieving these international development goals?
3. Paul shows how the “generous undertaking” of providing for vulnerable people in need brings good news, both to those who receive and to those who give. Do you think the G-20 summit has the potential to produce good news for people in both rich and poor countries? Why or why not?

Civic Reflection: Why are People in the Streets?

When the G-20 comes to Pittsburgh, the streets will be filled with groups vying for their attention and for the attention of the media. Fears of violent confrontations similar to those at the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle have shaped much of the city’s preparation for this summit.

Some groups are convinced that the governments represented at the summit lack legitimacy and are destructive to the human community. From their perspective, the G-20 perpetuates systems of domination that benefit the wealthy and powerful at the expense of poor and powerless people. Consequently, they believe that this G-20 summit can produce nothing positive and must be actively resisted. To quote from the anarchist Pittsburgh Organizing Group’s Web site, “It is our intention that the worldview the summit represents will die here.”

Other groups that will be in Pittsburgh reflect a diversity of opinion on the summit and a broad spectrum of ideas about the world’s economic and social future. They will march peacefully in the streets, organize workshops, hold discussion forums, or meet with the press. Many hold a more positive view of government’s role in promoting economic justice and citizens’ role in fostering change. Many see this global forum as a chance to educate citizens and to build grassroots networks for their causes.

Believing governments to have some sanction from God for the ordering of society yet also prone to error and sin, religious activists and leaders will remind government leaders of their responsibility to promote the common good. They will join others in calling for specific actions to respond to hunger and poverty, cancel debt, combat global warming, and protect human rights, and live up to promises made at past summits but not yet implemented. Each group, like the city of Pittsburgh itself, will be vying for media attention. One of the unanswered questions is which story the media will choose to tell.

Religious activists and leaders will remind government leaders of their responsibility to promote the common good.



Questions for Reflection:

1. In regard to overcoming hunger and poverty, how do you perceive the relative roles and effectiveness of social movements on the one hand and the coordinated actions of governments on the other?
2. What value do you see in the diversity of opinion and expression about the G-20? What problems may arise as a result of that diversity?
3. After the summit, how will you continue to stay engaged in the issues and concerns that the summit addresses or fails to address?
4. What possibilities do you see for people of faith to be good stewards of their citizenship?

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Bread for the World's Talking Points for the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit, Sept. 24-25, 2009

The United Nations estimates that, this year, more than 1 billion people will face acute hunger. The spike in world hunger is a result of high food prices and the compounding effect of the global economic crisis. Both have caused struggling households to cut down on the amount of food they eat and switch to less expensive foods that are often less nutritious.

Furthermore, the global economic crisis is now being severely felt in developing countries. There the World Bank expects economic growth to fall to 1 percent this year, compared with 6 percent in 2008 and 8 percent in 2007. The drastic fall in developing countries' economic outlook, especially for countries in Africa, is caused by several factors including: a steep decline in the price of commodities exported by developing countries; a decrease in remittances from emigrants to wealthy countries; and declining investment and private capital flows.

In this context, it is imperative that the G-20 Pittsburgh Summit focuses its attention on efforts to assist developing countries and help them weather the effects of the global economic crisis. President Obama's announcement of the Global Food Security Initiative at the end of the G-20 London Summit, as well as the LAquila Food Security Initiative, announced at the G-8 Summit in July, are steps in the right direction.

We urge G-20 leaders to:

- Lay the foundations for the implementation of the global food security initiative in ways that empower poor people and communities in developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty and address the root causes of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.
- Ensure that maternal and child nutrition is a key programmatic area and an outcome of the global food security initiative.
- Fulfill aid commitments and support efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- Improve aid effectiveness through better coordination, accountability, transparency, and ownership.
- Refrain from trade protectionism so poor farmers can export their crops for a fair price and developing countries can begin to rebuild their economies.

Appendix 2:

Excerpts from ONE Campaign's "Analysis of the G-20 Communiqué," London Summit, April 2, 2009

Reaffirming Millennium Development Goals and Official Development Assistance (ODA) pledges: The G-20 reaffirmed *the commitment to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and to achieving our respective ODA pledges, including commitments on Aid for Trade, debt relief, and the Gleneagles commitments, especially to sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).*

This sends a positive signal for the poorest parts of the world at a time when the financial global crisis threatened to make the focus of the Summit solely on developed and emerging economies. We continue to urge the donor countries to move forward from this rhetorical agreement and to fully implementing their historical commitments, by setting clear, accountable, and annual timetables for the delivery of their aid pledges.

To help developing countries weather the impact of the crisis, donors should also frontload aid in their pipelines as much as possible. In this regard, the EU's decision after the G-20 Summit to frontload €3 billion, or 72 percent of its budget support to African, Pacific and Caribbean nations is welcome. Others donors should follow suit.

A \$50 billion commitment for low income countries: The G-20 committed to providing *\$50 billion to support social protection, boost trade and safeguard development in low income countries.*

If this \$50 billion is used to support Sub-Saharan Africa immediately, it can potentially offset most of the output loss incurred in these countries, with strong positive impacts on the very poor. The \$50 billion in the communiqué however is for all low income countries, not just Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is unclear what the timeline for disbursing this resource is, and the communiqué does not specify whether this money will be provided in the form of grants or loans - lending agreements could be costly for low income countries with implications for years to come.

The communiqué also does not clearly indicate a baseline for this pledge - that is, whether this amount is a commitment for new and additional money, or whether it is merely a recommitment of previous pledges. The G-20 should make this money additional to past commitments, and clarify this position in future meetings.

International Financial Institutions Reform: The G-20 recognized in the communiqué that *emerging and developing economies, including the poorest, must have greater voice and representation* at international financial institutions. In addition, the G-20 reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the agreed package of IMF quota and voice reforms and World Bank reforms.

Notably, the G-20 agreed that the *heads and senior leadership of the international financial institutions should be appointed through an open, transparent, and merit-based selection process*. These reforms are welcome breakthroughs, if they are acted upon in the true spirit of reform. For example, merit-based selection process must mean that citizens of any country can apply, and this must be clarified at the Spring Meeting.

To read the One Campaign's complete "Analysis of the G-20 Communiqué, 2 April 2009", visit <http://one.org/c/us/policybrief/931/>

Appendix 3:

Bread for the World Welcomes G8 Hunger Initiative

WASHINGTON, DC, JULY 10, 2009 – Bread for the World welcomes the statement issued today by G-8 member nations at their meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, on reducing world hunger by increasing agricultural support and development in the world's poorest countries.

According to Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, the agreement by G8 leaders to contribute \$20 billion over three years to a new initiative to combat global hunger is a sign of hope for tens of millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

"The global economic collapse has been especially hard on poor people. An additional 150 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty and more than 1 billion people are struggling to feed themselves and their families," he said. "We hope and pray that today's promise translates into a durable commitment to support the efforts of hungry and poor people to lift themselves out of poverty."

The additional resources would go both toward rebuilding international capacity to address agricultural issues, and toward directly assisting farmers through improved access to higher-yielding seeds, fertilizer, credit and marketing. "This would be the most ambitious international effort in many years to help millions of the world's poorest farmers to significantly increase their crop yields to the benefit of their families and communities," said Rev. Beckmann.

Rev. Beckmann added that the G-8 initiative highlights a major change that is occurring in our nation's current hunger-fighting methods.

"We've been very generous as a country in providing emergency food aid. But we've been way too stingy when it comes to supporting farmers in the developing world to grow their own food," he said. "Almost anyone will tell you that it's better to teach a person to fish than simply to give her a fish. But our approach to fighting hunger hasn't reflected that wisdom until now."

The president has requested \$1.4 billion in the FY2010 budget reflecting his commitment to boosting smallholder agriculture in the developing countries. "Congress needs to support the president's request," urged Rev. Beckmann.

Appendix 4:

Jubilee USA Talking Points Related to the G-20

1. It is good that the G-20 recognized that the current crisis has had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people in the world's poorest countries, and in particular, that the G-20 recognized their "collective responsibility" to mitigate the social impact of the crisis. Helping the poorest is the right thing to do and it is also in our interest.
2. While the extra cash the G-20 announced is desperately needed by developing nations, new loans from the IMF could make things worse without serious reform at the IMF first. The G-20 should not give a blank check to the IMF without requiring serious reforms in the policy advice that the IMF doles out to poor countries.
3. For the poorest countries, President Obama and the G-20 should go further and offer support for debt cancellation and encourage grants to developing nations. Debt relief works: relief provided to date has enabled Tanzania to increase the number of children in primary schools by over 50 percent, build 2,500 additional schools, and recruit thousands of additional teachers.

For the complete list of Jubilee USA Talking Points for Letters to the Editor, visit: <http://www.jubileeusa.org/gold/talkingpoints.html>



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