

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT 2006

Missed Opportunities and New Perspectives

*A review of some developments in 2006 on the basis of
the Global Governance report received by the Bishops of
COMECE in 2001¹*



Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the
European Community
Rue Stévin, 42 – B-1000 Brussels – Belgium
Tel. +32 (0)2 235.05.10 – Fax +32 (0)2 230.33.34
– www.comece.eu

¹ This report can be found on the Webpage :
http://www.comece.org/upload/pdf/pub_GG_010900_en.pdf

INTRODUCTION

In 2001 the Bishops of the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) asked a group of high level experts to present them with a report on the issue of Global Governance with a view to suggesting ways to improve the institutional arrangements for dealing with global matters. This report, warmly welcomed by the Bishops and subsequent readers, guided the activities of COMECE concerning the process of economic globalisation in subsequent years. In the meantime an Annual Global Governance Assessment was published comparing global events of each calendar year with the recommendations and proposals contained in the initial report. This year's review is shorter. It tries to satisfy a wish expressed by many readers namely, to find a more readable update of the issue. In recent years, international migration has become a more and more important topic in the debate on Global Governance. For this reason the present text includes a chapter on this subject although this was not dealt with in the first report. Other chapters deal with values and institutional arrangements for Global Governance in the areas of trade, finance & development, environment and - at a horizontal level - the G8 process.

The Catholic Church, being simultaneously local and global, is in a special position when it comes to understanding the process of globalisation and its global consequences. This also gives it an interest in Global Governance. In fulfilling its mission COMECE relates specifically to the European Union. It experiences and perceives the EU as a model of States which co-operate and deal with common problems needing a shared solution at European level. On the basis of this experience and insight COMECE discerns a responsibility in social ethical terms to foster the search for new solutions for a better and more effective framework at world level.

The present publication, with the exception of chapters three and five, which were written by Dr. Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhof, is the work of the COMECE secretariat. The document is addressed to Catholics and citizens in general and should allow them a quick overview of current trends on the basis of the structure and approach established by the initial Report on Global Governance.

1. VALUES FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE – RELIGIONS AND THE GLOBAL COMMON GOOD

Since the Global Governance Project was launched by the Bishops of COMECE in 2001 and the group of experts drafted the initial report, it has been stressed that better Global Governance can only be achieved on the basis of a fundamental consensus on certain values. A value consensus is necessary to support a more coherent and complete institutional setting at world level. Institutions at every level of society, that are not supported by means of force, can only become effective and sustainable when the citizens or nations whom they are supposed to serve share a fundamental set of values.

The initial report stated that the values at the foundation of a system of global governance should be: respect for human dignity, responsibility, solidarity, subsidiarity, coherence, transparency, and accountability. In 2006, these values were again an important issue for discussion and debate in many global level fora. The positive contribution of religion to sustaining these values was stressed in many speeches and publications.

However, in early 2006 the debate was overshadowed by the publication of cartoons representing the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. This event and the sharp reactions to it both from the Muslim and the non-Muslim world underlined how important religion has become in global politics in recent years.

In the light of this event some lessons can be drawn. Although freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and an indispensable prerequisite for a functioning democracy, it needs to be carefully articulated in respect of freedom of worship which is an equally important human right. The cartoon incident showed that for many, respect for faith equals an acknowledgement of dignity. A system of global governance, whose immediate goals should be the eradication of poverty and the protection of the environment, must take account of the need for respect of religious freedom and human dignity.

Another event that provoked a global debate on values was the speech given by Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg during his visit to Germany in September 2006. While this speech provoked some negative reaction, especially in the Muslim world, on the other hand, it also resulted in many constructive efforts to intensify inter-religious dialogue, especially between Muslims and Christians. The letter of 38 Muslim scholars to Pope Benedict XVI is an outstanding example of the new quality of inter-religious and intercultural relations. Whilst stressing the importance of the relationship between the Christian and Muslim community as “the most important factor in contributing to meaningful peace around the world”, they expressed their hope of establishing “sincere and frank relationships based upon mutual respect, justice and what is common in the essence in our shared Abrahamic traditions”.²

² Open Letter to Pope Benedict XVI : Islamica Magazine, Issue 18, 2006, pp.26-32 (Paper edition) or on http://www.islamicamagazine.com/issue18/openletter18_lowres.pdf

Advocating above all the complementary aspects of faith and reason in his Regensburg speech, Pope Benedict stressed that religions should not take over the role of politics but rather that, as he had already stated in his first Encyclical letter "Deus caritas est" - spiritual forces are important in affirming values such as justice, responsibility and solidarity insofar as they imply the renunciation of personal advantage.

A good example of such an understanding of the role of religion with regard to politics was the common declaration of Pope Benedict XVI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in November. With regard to the environment they jointly stated: "At present, in the face of the great threats to the natural environment, we want to express our concern at the negative consequences for humanity and for the whole of creation which could result from economic and technological progress that does not know its limits. As religious leaders, we consider it one of our duties to encourage and to support all efforts made to protect God's creation, and to bequeath to future generations a world in which they will be able to live".³

In his annual message for the World Day of Peace broadcast from the Vatican on 12th December Pope Benedict further stressed the moral and religious dimension of development: "The destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the selfish hoarding of the earth's resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars, precisely because they are the consequences of an inhumane concept of development.

³http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_dichiarazione-comune_en.html

Indeed, if development were limited to the technical-economic aspect, obscuring the moral-religious dimension, it would not be an integral human development, but a one-sided distortion which would end up by unleashing man's destructive capacities."

Meanwhile, the United Nations continued to sponsor "The Alliance of Civilisations" initiative. At the presentation of a report in Istanbul on 13th November, drafted by a high level expert group at his request, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, stated "the problem is not the Quran or the Torah or the Bible." This generally more positive approach to the question of religion and values was preceded by a call from UN experts "to put together an inter-agency team that could work with experienced non-UN partners representing international faith-based organizations"⁴.

⁴ Azza Karam and Matthew Weiner, You gotta have faith at the UN, in: International Herald Tribune, 24.10.2006

2. IMF GOVERNANCE REFORMS – WHAT PROGRESS TOWARDS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP?

The International Monetary Fund is a cornerstone of the global economic order. Through its capacity to analyse economic, monetary and financial developments, to monitor policy implementation and to lend in times of financial crisis, the IMF plays a key role in the support of the integrity of the international monetary and financial system (see COMECE Report on Global Governance of 2001, paragraph 32). However, given that it was created in 1945, its governance structure reflects by and large the balance of powers of the post-second world War era, thus weakening the legitimacy of the IMF in today's world.

At the Annual Meeting of the IMF in Autumn 2006 in Singapore, Finance Ministers and central bank governors of the Fund's highest decision making body, the International Monetary and Finance Committee, approved a comprehensive reform programme towards a more balanced representation of developing and emerging market countries. In 2006, first steps were taken. In particular, Member States agreed to increase the quotas of China, South Korea, Mexico and Turkey with a view to bringing their voting rights and financing obligations into line with the relative weight that these countries have attained in the global economy in recent years. Other elements of the reform programme require further discussion in the course of 2007; they include:

- A revision of the quota formula with a view to simplifying the determination of quotas, making this more transparent

and giving more importance to the relative economic weight of a country;

- Further ad hoc quota adjustments to ensure that quota shares evolve in line with economic development;
- An increase of basic voting rights⁵ to improve the representation of low income countries and the prevention of an erosion of voting shares of low income countries in the future;
- Additional human and technical resources for the African representatives on the Board of the IMF;
- A review of the selection procedure with regard to the role of the Managing Director⁶.

The EU plays a pivotal role in the IMF governance reform process, despite its still fragmented representation in the Fund. Giving a greater voice in the decision making of the Fund to developing and emerging market countries implies some reduction of relative voting power for some industrialised countries, including certain European countries currently well-represented in the Fund, but whose representation is based on historical considerations. At the same time, the reform of IMF governance provides an opportunity for the EU to consolidate its representation in the Fund. The authors of the 2001 COMECE report emphasised the special responsibility of the EU for the promotion of

⁵ IMF voting rights are a function of the share that Member States hold in the Fund. Basic voting rights are granted to poor Member States with very small quota shares to ensure minimum voting rights.

⁶ Traditionally the post of the Managing Director of the IMF is given to a European, while the post of the President of the World Bank is taken by a US-citizen. This informal rule has come increasingly under criticism, particularly in Asia and developing countries.

reform for global governance. Unfortunately, rather than spearheading the process in a decisive manner, the EU appears to be hampering consensus-building due to diverging interests within the EU. It is disappointing to see that the option for a strong, single EU representation at the Fund appears to remain a far-off vision, rather than a goal pursued with vigour.

Designed to help broaden the legitimacy base of the organisation, the IMF governance reform programme approved in 2006 moves overall in the right direction. Given their relative timidity however, the envisaged reforms do not generate a significant momentum towards a more coherent global governance system. This is largely due to the fact that a decade after the Asian financial crisis, the IMF's political clout has diminished considerably. At the beginning of 2007, many emerging market economies, and indeed the international financial system as a whole, are perceived to be far less vulnerable to financial turmoil than during the 1990s. Awash with foreign reserves at record levels, buoyant economic growth and booming domestic capital markets, many emerging market economies see themselves as being less likely to be in need of potential assistance from the Fund and simultaneously less obliged to "listen" to the IMF than a decade ago.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF THE MULTILATERAL APPROACH IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AFTER THE SUSPENSION OF THE DOHA DEVELOPMENT NEGOTIATIONS

In July 2006 at a mini-ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva, the Doha Development negotiations were suspended. This failure was seen as a setback for all members. As the development round was particularly intended to include developing countries into the global trade system, the less advantaged are among the most significant losers of this disappointing conference. The Doha Development Agenda started in Doha, Qatar in 2001, with subsequent ministerial meetings in Cancún, Mexico (2003), and Hong Kong, China (2005). It aims to lower trade barriers around the world. At the centre of the round stands the promotion of development. It was intended to conclude the round by the end of 2006; an agreed goal was missed by the international community.

In July 2006 negotiators were unable to reach consensus, in particular on the issues of market access and domestic support for agricultural products. The six major members of WTO, Australia, Brazil, the European Union, India, Japan and the United States, became bogged down on these issues and did not even manage to progress negotiations on market access for non-agricultural products.

The failure was regarded as a "missed opportunity" especially given that it has become increasingly unlikely that the Doha round will be finalized before the expiration date of the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) granted to the President of the

United States by the US Congress in July 2007. Any trade agreement after that date will have to be approved in detail by the US Congress.

Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the WTO, warned of the danger of losing the opportunity to integrate more vulnerable members into international trade - "the best hope for growth and poverty alleviation". A negative outcome would be a setback for the world economy and possibly provoke a resurgence of protectionism.

In October 2006, the chairman of the African Union, Mr. Denis Sassou N'Guesso, President of the Republic of Congo, urged all WTO members, and in particular the G6, to break the current deadlock, since "for millions of (African) citizens, the Doha Development Agenda represents the hope of improving their living standards and freeing themselves from absolute poverty."

In December 2006, Pascal Lamy reported a new desire to come back to the negotiating table, and to do so rapidly. According to Lamy, "an increasing level of engagement" was starting to appear in consultations by the Chairs of the negotiating groups. However, the challenge remained to translate this new willingness to meet and negotiate into substantive changes in order to unlock the process and to be able to successfully conclude the round. He warned that the failure of the Doha negotiations could lead to more bilateral and regional agreements and thus bring into question the multilateral system including the effective dispute settlement system of the WTO.

Before the WTO mini-ministerial conference in July, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace highlighted the value of the ultimate aim of the negotiations in a special declaration. The achievement of greater justice and particularly "equity in trade relations" was presented as a major concern by the Holy See. The Pontifical Council recalled the words of Pope Paul VI, who forty years ago in his encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* wrote "Free trade can be called just only when it conforms to the demands of social justice." (no. 59). The Pontifical Council reminded the negotiators that five years ago the Doha round opened up a new horizon of hope in this field, successfully negotiating a declaration on development and the alleviation of poverty, with a specific commitment to improving the effective participation of the least developed countries in the multilateral trade system (Doha Declaration, numbers 2 and 3). It highlighted the fact that commercial negotiations should always take into account the impact of the outcome of such negotiations upon the human race and the dignity of each and every human being. According to the Pontifical Council, in this process the multilateral system itself - a system, which the Catholic Church strongly supports - is at stake. Ultimately, international trade negotiations must seek a fuller integration of North-South and South-South agreements, which are critical to a hopeful future. Without them peace for the entire human race is at risk.

4. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: A NEW CHALLENGE FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

International migration has become a global phenomenon during recent decades, representing a serious challenge for global governance. The year 2006 was marked by several initiatives setting up new structures for global governance in this area: the foundation of the Global Migration Group (GMG) in early 2006 and the first UN high-level dialogue on migration and development on 14th/15th September 2006.

According to the United Nations Secretariat estimates, the number of Migrants⁷ worldwide indicate a figure between 185 and 192 million people in 2005.⁸ It was ascertained as a long-term trend that the number of migrants has increased significantly over recent decades: in 1960 there were 76 million migrants worldwide (2.5 % of the world population). By 2000 the number of migrants had increased to 175 million people (2.9 % of the world population). Between 1980 and 2000 the number of migrants living in the developed world increased from 48 million to 110 million, compared with an increase from 52 million to 65 million in the developing world. Today it is estimated that some 60 % of the world's migrants live in the developed world. Between 1970 and 2000 the number of refugees increased from 4.5 Million (5.5 % of all migrants) to 17 Million (9.7 % of all migrants). Asylum was granted to the majority of these refugees not in developed countries but

rather in developing countries, and in particular in Africa and Asia.

Up until 2002 several international organisations worked on different aspects of international migration without coordinating their efforts within an international network. Within the UN family, for example, the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) were all dealing with migration issues from their own respective angles. And, outside the UN family, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) dealt with the management of migration without a clear commitment to the value basis of the UN. Recognizing the need to coordinate the growing information on international migration among interested organizations, the United Nations Secretariat held a Coordination Meeting on International Migration on 11th-12th July 2002 in New York. This meeting was followed by several other coordination meetings.⁹

On 9th December 2003 the UN Secretary General, in tandem with a number of governments, launched the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) in Geneva. In response to the recommendations of a remarkable report from the Global Commission, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan established the Global Migration Group (GMG) in early 2006. The GMG is an inter-agency group of 10 international

⁷ UN Secretariat definition: Migrants are people who live in a different country than the country in which they were born.

⁸ Cf. International Organisation for Migration: World Migration Report 2005, p. 379.

⁹ In April 2003 the informal Geneva Migration Group was founded by six international organisations: UNODC, UNHCHR, IOM, OHCHR, UNCTAD, ILO. Terms of reference: Cf. <http://www.unhchr.ch/migration/gmg.htm>.

organisations¹⁰ *“which aims to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and the provision of more coherent and stronger leadership to improve the overall effectiveness of the United Nations and the international community’s policy and operational response to the opportunities and challenges presented by international migration.”*¹¹

On 23rd January 2006 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Peter Sutherland, an international businessman, former Director-General of GATT – WTO, and also a former Member of the European Commission, to serve as his Special Representative for Migration and to assist the Secretary-General prepare for the UN High-level Dialogue.

On the basis of the report of the Global Commission on International Migration¹², UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a report on migration and development which was published on 18th May 2006 in anticipation of the event. In his report he described the correlation between migration and development as having a positive impact on both the countries of origin and the target countries, as well as for migrants

themselves. The UN report develops a new agenda for migration policy on the basis of extensive analysis, with the focus necessarily on the observance of human rights. States should develop a long-term-oriented migration policy for both highly-qualified and less well qualified migrants. They should also encourage and support the entrepreneurial spirit of migrants and their families. The contribution of the diaspora to the development of the countries of origin should likewise be strengthened. In the face of globalisation, it is necessary to support and promote the education and mobility of human capital. From an institutional perspective, the UN Secretary-General proposes the establishment of a UN consultation forum for all States.

When the UN High-level Dialogue finally took place on 14th/15th September 2006 more than 130 Governments participated in the event.¹³ In his opening speech the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated : “Just a few years ago, many people did not think it possible to discuss migration at the United Nations. [...] Yet here you are, and I sense that the mood is changing.” Noting that politicians were now more receptive to discussing the impact of migration, he said more countries were now significantly involved in, and affected by, international migration. He reiterated his proposal to establish a Global Forum on Migration and Development as a standing body in which countries would be able to discuss and exchange best ideas and practices on the issue.

¹⁰ [ILO](#), [IOM](#), [UNCTAD](#), [UNDP](#), [UN-DESA](#), [UNFPA](#), [UNHCHR](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNODC](#), and [World Bank](#).

¹¹ Terms of reference:

<http://www.un.int/iom/Global%20Migration%20Group%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf>.

¹² For the area of migration and development, the World Commission proposes that the contribution of migrants to the development of their country of origin and the prosperity of the target country be recognised and strengthened. The members of the World Commission recommend greater cooperation between states. States and financial institutions should simplify money transfers to the countries of origin. Investment support should be complemented by the establishment of macroeconomic structures in the countries of origin. Furthermore, the diaspora should be encouraged to help development by way of investment and knowledge transfer. Finally, states and international organisations should develop approaches to strengthen the positive effects of return and circular migration.

¹³ The UN webpage provides further information on the event; cf. <http://www.un.org/migration/index.html>.

The opening session of this high level Dialogue was followed by four plenary sessions and four round tables which dealt with topics such as (1) the effects of international migration on economic and social development, (2) respect for the human rights of all migrants as well as the prevention of smuggling and trafficking in human beings, (3) the multidimensional aspects of international migration and developments (e.g. remittances) and (4) the promotion of partnerships and capacity-building on all levels.

Finally, it was decided to establish a Global Forum on International Migration and Development. The first meeting of this Global Forum has been scheduled for 9th to 11th July 2007 in Brussels (Belgium). As the hosting country plans to reserve one entire day for the dialogue with non-state actors, the Churches and Church-related organisations should actively participate in this event.

5. THE NEED FOR A NEW DYNAMIC TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

In February 2007, Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) adopted the first part of the Fourth Assessment Report on climate change. According to this report dealing with the physical science basis of climate change, evidence for warming of the climate is unequivocal. The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide in 2005 far exceeds the natural range over the last 650,000 years. Based upon improved research methodologies, the IPCC concludes that most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations thus increasing the certainties from the 66% probability stated by the Third Assessment Report in 2001, to a probability of more than 90%. Using a range of emission scenarios, the IPCC predicts for the next two decades a warming of about 0.2°C per decade. Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21st century. According to best estimates, the global average surface air warming is likely to range from 1.8°C to 4.0°C by 2090-2099 relative to 1990-1999. The global average sea level is projected to have risen by between 18cm and 59cm by the end of the 21st Century.

The Framework Convention on Climate Change, together with the Kyoto Protocol, provides the only international framework for combating climate change. Under the Kyoto Protocol, industrialized countries agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas

emissions by at least 5% during the first commitment period from 2008 to 2012, compared to 1990 levels. The Kyoto Protocol promotes international cooperation to combat climate change by market-based instruments such as an international emissions trading system. Furthermore, project-based mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism allow industrialized countries to fulfil part of their emission reduction commitments through investment in emission reduction projects in developing countries. So far this mechanism has had a good start. However, the economic incentives of the Kyoto Protocol need to be strengthened and better implemented so that they may contribute more significantly to the protection of the earth's climate system.

In November 2006, the UN Climate Change Conference took place in Nairobi, Kenya. Although it was regarded as having been a success, the international community is still far from the post-2012 agreement needed for the post-commitment period of the original Kyoto Protocol. Industrialized countries will have to agree to stronger emission reduction commitments. Recent remarks at the world Economic Forum by John McCain, US senator and possible presidential candidate, raised hopes that the US may intensify its involvement in international climate change measures. But developing countries also need to commit to binding emission limitation commitments. The earth's climate system can only be saved if countries worldwide stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. A long term agreement is necessary to

guarantee the continuation of the new emissions market and thus to maintain the value of carbon beyond 2012.

Long-term environmental problems such as climate change cannot be resolved adequately with short-term political solutions. The long-term strategies needed to protect the earth's atmosphere deserve unwavering political support at all levels. Currently, the international negotiations are not moving forward with the necessary dynamic. The subject lacks the political leadership at all levels for effective long-term action in combating climate change.

In a meeting with the new UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yvo de Boer, suggested holding a world summit on climate change.

As climate change affects not only the protection of the environment for both present and future generations, but also energy, economic, security and development issues, heads of State and Government need to take up the issue and show global leadership in the protection of the earth's climate system.

Strengthening the international institutional framework for the environment would also ameliorate all global environmental issues and not just climate related problems. A World Environment Organisation could articulate environmental concerns in an audible, credible and effective manner and promote coherent and consistent decisions on the international level.

6. THE G8 – WHAT PROGRESS TOWARDS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP?

The need to match the increased global economic, social and environmental interlinkages with coherent and effective political interaction at the global level is one of the central messages of the 2001 COMECE Report on Global Governance. This need is also the major argument behind the call for the creation of a Global Governance Group (GGG). The Group of Eight (G8), a small group operating at the highest political level, has the potential to address and potentially bridge coherence gaps in an efficient manner. Yet it lacks the legitimacy and acceptability for globally effective decision making. What progress has there been towards global leadership? Could the G8 be the nucleus of a Global Governance Group (GGG)?

Having participated informally in meetings on the margin of G7 Summits since 1994, Russia was the first emerging market economy to become a full member of the G7 (thereafter known as the G8) in 1998¹⁴.

The invitation to Russia to join the seven richest industrial countries' club was symptomatic of the desire to broaden the base of the G7, in order to increase its reach, global impact and legitimacy. Gradually, the issues discussed at G8 Summits also

shifted. Originally a World Economic Summit, the G8 extended the scope of their discussions more and more beyond the economic sphere to cover challenges of a broader nature, as well as various global threats. Under the Canadian Presidency at the Kananaskis Summit in 2002, the G7 invited Russia to host a G8 Summit for the first time in 2006. The priorities of the 2006 G8 St. Petersburg Summit were energy security, communicable diseases (notably avian influenza and the possibility of a human influenza pandemic), education and development issues related to the so-called Russian “Near Abroad”, including mainly states that had previously been part of the Soviet Union.

The dispute between Russia and Ukraine on the delivery and transit of natural gas (which led to gas delivery to Western Europe being cut off for a short time during the winter of 2005/2006), as well as Russia's dubious record on human rights and civil liberties spurred tensions within the G8 and led to calls in the Western press to boycott the St. Petersburg Summit. Nonetheless, the Presidency managed a fairly smooth preparation for the Summit, although with ultimately modest results.

The issues discussed at St Petersburg clearly failed to gain the same global attention as the debt relief, development assistance and climate change on the agenda of the 2005 Gleneagles Summit under the Presidency of Tony Blair. Most attention was focussed on energy security. However, the Summit declaration on energy fell short of expectations, as Russia was widely perceived as pushing a domestic agenda (e.g. access to distribution networks in Western Europe) and

¹⁴ In addition to Russia the G8 consists of the US, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, the UK, Italy and the EU. The G8 Presidency alternates annually. Germany holds the G8 Presidency in 2007, coinciding during the first half of the year with its 6-months Presidency of the European Council. The EU is a quasi-full member of the G8. The President of the Commission and the President of the European Council participate in the Summits, and the Commission is represented in all the preparatory meetings at Sherpa level. However, the EU does not enjoy the privilege of presiding over the G8 nor of hosting a summit.

conflicting views prevailed on the part of the other G8 members. In the areas of health and education, the G8 essentially expressed support for existing initiatives and called for better international cooperation on disease management.

For some time, the G8 has increased its reach by inviting on an ad hoc basis third countries to so-called “outreach” meetings. The outreach guests have usually been a subset of the largest emerging market economies (India, Brazil, South Africa and China under the UK Presidency; the same plus Mexico under the Russian and German Presidencies). This reflects the need for the G8 to open up to a larger group of players when discussing certain issues of global import, such as trade and development, where an agreement among themselves (even if carried to the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the IMF for broader endorsement) is not sufficiently effective.

There have also been issue-specific outreach activities (e.g. the UK Presidency invited Israel and the Palestinian Authority to some meetings, and the US Presidency initiated meetings with Muslim countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa). However, for the time being, the G8 is not considering a permanent enlargement of its circle. This leaves the G8 in a situation where, whenever issues go beyond their immediate reach, they have to create ad-hoc alliances. The lack of a permanent secretariat also complicates the continuity and follow-up on the initiatives of individual Presidencies. The group of 20 Finance Ministers (G-20), comprising the G8 and a number of emerging market economies, was created at the initiative of the G7 in 1999 with a view to ensuring a more

global scope. However, it remains focused mainly on financial issues, and meetings at Head of Government level are not envisaged at this stage.

Angela Merkel, during her 2007 German Presidency, intends bringing the G8 Summit back closer to its initial economic focus, with priorities on (1) investment, innovation and sustainability, including climate change as a major area of concern; (2) African development, and (3) Cooperation with Emerging Countries including the management of globalisation.

CONCLUSION

In some ways, 2006 was a year of missed opportunities. The suspension of the WTO trade round can be cited in this respect as well as the poor results produced by the G8-summit in St Petersburg. On the other hand, new perspectives opened up. The start of the governance reform process at the IMF is one of these. A new dynamic in order to deal with environmental challenges and especially climate change is another. The increasing awareness of religious leaders of different traditions of the need for common discussion on values and alternative life-styles can also be counted as an encouraging development. One legacy of Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, is the laying of the ground-work for a better institutional response to the problems arising from international migration. However, another goal of his tenure, the reform of the United Nations itself, clearly did not succeed. Therefore, expectations will again turn to the G8 process which over time may take a more structured approach to its work, as well as acquiring a more legitimate composition. Still far from being the Global Governance Group that the initial COMECE report proposed, it should nevertheless have the potential to develop in that direction. For this reason the Catholic Church might be well advised to follow the G8's work more closely and in a more coordinated way. Since the President of the European Commission represents the EU at the G8, as part of its mission COMECE might explore appropriate initiatives to accompany the G8. To this end the organisation of regular meetings of bishops' conferences from the G8 countries deserves serious consideration as a way to support advances in this area with insights from the Social Teaching of the Church.