

Economic Summits and G7 Policymaking: Improving Compliance and Credibility

Since 1975, the leaders of the major industrial democracies have met at the annual G7 Summit to address the most pressing international issues of the day, deliberate on shared problems and collectively set directions for the global community. During this process, the G7 has often produced ambitious wide-ranging agreements in an effort to generate a broad multilateral consensus on a diverse number of international economic and political issues. Yet despite the centrality of the G7 and the new interest by international relations theorists on the issue of compliance with international agreements,¹ there has been little effort to analyze and explain G7 Summit compliance, as a foundation for identifying proposals to improve its compliance record. Although there exists a wealth of scholarly and professional writing on the G7, virtually all of it focuses on the first stage of reaching agreements through effective policy coordination. As such, little is known about the extent to which G7 members comply with the commitments they make at their annual Summit meetings. This paper thus addresses the question of compliance with G7 Summit commitments and in so doing, is able to offer proposals for improving the compliance record of the G7 member states.

The first section of this paper details the findings of three separate data sets on G7 Summit compliance, based on studies by von Furstenberg and Daniels, Kokotsis and Kirton, and the University of Toronto G7 Research Group. This section summarizes compliance with Summit commitments both overall and in areas central to Canadian

¹ See, for example, Jacobson, Harold K. and Edith Brown Weiss. "Strengthening Compliance with International Environmental Accords: Preliminary Observations from a Collaborative Project", in Global Governance, Vol. 1, No. 2 (May-August) 1995; Chayes, Abram and Antonia Handler Chayes. The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements (forthcoming); Mitchell, Ronald B. Intentional Oil Pollution at Sea: Environmental Policy and Treaty Compliance. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994.