

LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

Political Issues

*The G-7 Summits have become far more
than a discussion of economic issues.*

Macroeconomic and trade issues have traditionally been uppermost on summit agendas. But other global issues have gained prominence over the years too. Since the 1980s, G-7 leaders have focussed much of their attention on political issues. They've discussed such problems as terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, human rights abuses, international migration, the environment, and nuclear safety and proliferation. Their efforts have led to specific actions—leaders have set forces into motion in their own countries as well as in international organizations best suited to deal with the issue at hand.

At their annual meetings, G-7 leaders also discuss the most pressing political concerns of the day. These talks largely deal with regional crises. In recent years, political discussions have focussed on the situations in the former Soviet Union, South Africa, the Middle East, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Rwanda, and North Korea.

DEFINITION:

Macroeconomics—
Economic behaviour
in whole systems,
such as countries or
groups of countries
— the main focus
of G-7 meetings.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

The 1986 Chernobyl disaster raised serious concerns about the safety of Soviet-designed RBMK and older VVER nuclear reactors. Those concerns have increased as more information about these reactors has become available. Power plants using these reactors continue to operate throughout the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe to meet urgent energy requirements. As the Chernobyl accident illustrated, however, the risks posed by these plants affect many nations in Europe and beyond.

Leaders at the Munich Summit in 1992 agreed to co-ordinate G-7 actions to improve nuclear safety levels at the higher risk plants in these countries. They created a Nuclear Safety Working Group of G-7 experts to advise them. Since that time, total donor commitments amount to about \$1 billion. Canada currently chairs the Nuclear Safety Working Group. The Group of 24 (G-24), comprising member countries of the

OECD and the former Warsaw Pact, was created to co-ordinate international efforts and has proved to be effective—especially in bringing experts from East and West together to resolve technical issues and to establish priorities for safety improvement programs.

As a further result of the G-7 nuclear safety initiative, a multilateral nuclear safety account has been established at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The account provides funds for urgent safety projects that are not covered by other assistance programs. Donors already have committed ECU 58 million to two major projects—the Kozloduy nuclear plant in Bulgaria and the Ignalina nuclear plant in Lithuania. The funds are being used for short-term safety upgrades at these plants until other sources of energy can be brought on stream. Nuclear safety projects for Russia are now ready for approval as well.

Last year in Naples, G-7 leaders accepted an