



# G7 AND THE C7: A HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT

*This paper is a summary report of the workshop “**In the Spotlight: G7 and C7 – History, Challenges and the Way Forward**” that took place on 15 March 2022. The workshop was part of a capacity building series accompanying the 2022 C7 process. Designed to build capacities and share knowledge between all stakeholders involved, the workshops address a variety of thematic and strategic areas relevant to the engagement of the C7.*

## What is the G7?

The G7 was first held in the Chateau de Rambouillet, hosted by the French President in 1975. It arose out of the oil shock and ensuing financial crisis of the early 70s and was a place where leaders of world’s most industrialised democracies, France, US, Germany, Japan, the UK and Italy, could meet in an informal setting to discuss great matters of economics and energy. Canada joined the group in the following year, the EU (or EC as it was known back then) in 1981 and finally Russia, which was a member of the G8 from 1998 to its expulsion in 2014 after it invaded the Crimea.

The G7 was conceived to be a light, informal, meeting of the leaders and one or two staff members, to ensure they could discuss issues freely, openly, and make quick decisions. But like all ventures, the format has slowly become more complicated and institutionalised although the Group maintains an informal structure without a secretariat or set agenda.

Like all Summits, the Leader’s agenda and discussions are not just made up on the day when the Leaders meet but are drafted and discussed in the six-odd months before the Summit. The G7 has a rotating presidency where each country leads the

G7 for a calendar year – the rotation is set: France, US, UK, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada – the EU does not host the G7, but did so in extraordinary circumstances in 2014 when it took over after Russia was expelled from the group.

The G7 preparations are led by the personal representative of each Leader, called a Sherpa, who meets with his or her (although they have almost entirely been men) counterparts four or five times in the lead up to the Summit to discuss and agree the Leader’s agenda and negotiate the final outcome paper or communique that is issued at the end of the Leader’s Summit. The Sherpa is supported by a Foreign Affairs Sous-Sherpa (FASS) who deals with development, socio-economic, and environment issues; a Political Director who leads on foreign and security issues. In addition, there is a Finance Sous-Sherpa which works on the financial aspects of the Summit and supports the Finance Ministers in advance of their meetings.

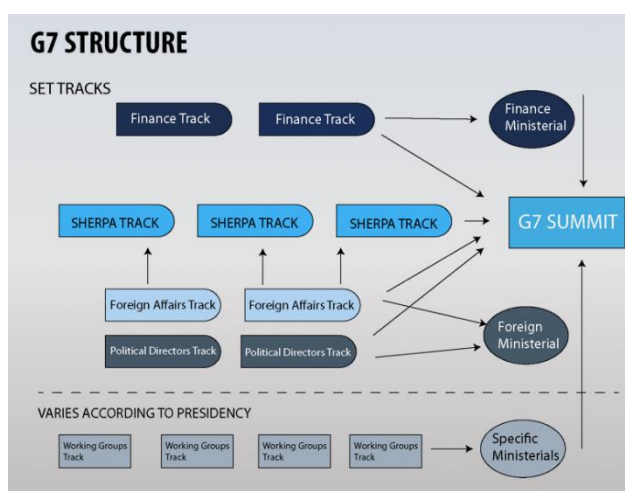
In 1998, the UK introduced the first G7 Ministerials, where Ministers of departments would meet to discuss their areas in greater detail – this freed up the Leaders to focus on the bigger picture. By tradition, the Finance and Foreign Ministers meet every year but it is up to each G7 presidency to set out which other Ministerials will take place, depending on the host government’s priorities and



global situation. In 2022, the German government will convene 13 Ministerials in addition to the standing Finance and Foreign Affairs Ministerials. These meetings will cover a wide range of issues including health, development, gender, agriculture, trade, labour and social issue, and the environment amongst others. Each Ministerial will be supported by an Experts Working Group comprising representatives from across the G7 governments which will negotiate and draft the outcomes and areas of discussion for the Ministers.

Most of these Ministerials will take place prior to the Leader’s Summit, scheduled for the 26th to 28th June at the Schloss Elmau, the same venue as the 2015 German G7. This will allow the G7 Leaders to incorporate aspects of the outcomes of the Ministerials into their own Summit communique.

Some Ministers meet a number of times in the year: the Finance Ministers will likely meet three times prior to the Summit and two more times by the end of the year. Similarly, the Foreign Ministers will meet twice: once in May and again in the year.



The paperwork that comes out of the G7 is substantial. Each Ministerial will issue its own outcome document, usually called a declaration or communique, as will the Leader’s for their Summit. In addition, there are Annexes or

supporting papers delving into more detail or an initiative. For example, at the UK Summit in 2021, the Leaders issued the Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communique as well as a Summary of the Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communique, a G7 Carbis Bay Health Declaration, a G7 2030 Open Societies Statement, and a G7 2021 Research Compact.

Finally, each year the G7 issues an Accountability Report which reviews progress toward previous G7 commitments. The host government decides which aspect their accountability report will review, in 2021, the UK focused on health. Every three years, the G7 undertakes a comprehensive review of progress against all development and development-related commitments. Germany will publish the three-year review as accountability report in 2022.

### Why the G7?

Why should civil society take the time and energy to engage with the G7 with its complex and opaque process at all? While the G7 has been eclipsed in size and economic heft of the G20, it still remains an important and influential group of countries, especially in relation to global development and climate change.

The G7 has a history of producing landmark agreements that have advanced global development. Its agreement back in 1998 to address developing country debt started the HIPC debt process that led to the (temporary as it turned out) reduction of debt loads of many developing countries. In 2000, at the Japanese Okinawa Summit, the G7 agreed to establish the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB and in 2001, at the Italian Genoa Summit, they funded the new Global Fund. The Fund is still operating today and has had an enormous impact on the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. In 2005, at the landmark Gleneagles G7, hosted by the UK, the G7



agreed to increase their aid to developing countries by \$50 billion to reach \$100 billion per year. In 2010 at the Canadian G7 in Muskoka, the G7 agreed to the Muskoka Initiative which allocated billions towards addressing maternal, new-born and child health. More recently, the 2015 Elmau Summit in Germany, the G7 set a vision of phasing out fossil fuels by 2100 and agree to lift 500 million people out of malnutrition and hunger by 2030 – a vision that is well off target following the impact of the pandemic and the forthcoming food price crisis as a result of the Ukraine war.

So, when the G7 set its sights on a target, it can and has mobilised billions to address a problem or crisis. No doubt getting money out of the G7 has been harder in the past few years: G7 initiatives are now usually in the \$2 to \$5 billion range and no longer the \$50 billion or so seen at Gleneagles in 2005. The G7 seem to now prefer to set a vision or long-term goal to drive action at the member government level and at the international institutions that the G7 member countries dominate as opposed to making large funding commitments at the Summits.

### **How has Civil Society Engaged the G7?**

Engaging the G7 has seen a marked change over the past 25 years. G7s used to be marked with protest and clashes with the police which led to the sad death of a protester in Genoa in 2001. Now, since 2011, the G7s have not seen large scale protests and riots but are instead accompanied by dialogue and engagement. This change has come about in part as the G7 is no longer seen as the apex in global governance, but also due to the fact that the G7 has reached out to policy stakeholders and, in doing so, created a more institutionalised approach.

### **Civil 7**

Surprisingly, the C7 was created in 2006 under the Russian presidency. President Putin convened a dialogue of civil society representatives in a two-day event in Moscow. The event brought groups from across the issues together to discuss policy recommendations which were then presented to President Putin in a round table on the second day. The German government replicated this event in 2007 when it hosted civil society in a two-day event in Bonn which culminated in a meeting with all the G7 Sherpa in a round-table format. This was the beginning of the formal outreach with civil society.

The C7 was not the only engagement group at the time. Various networks would lead the discussions with the G7 on a variety of issues and the G7 Global Taskforce, and informal group of civil society groups from across the G7 regularly engaged the G7 Sherpas in policy roundtables and produced an annual Common Lobbying Policy Paper bringing together the list of asks to the G7 governments. These other informal engagement groups complimented the C7 as the C7 was from 2006 until just recently, an event and not a process. Before 2019-2021, the Civil 7 did not operate outside of the annual two-day summit – there were no pre-meetings, set working groups or follow up to the event. This change from an event to a process started in 2019, was formalised in 2021 and is now the official process for G7 engagement.

### **Official Engagement Groups**

In 2019, the French government introduced the idea of official engagement groups. Before then the C7 and others were more ad hoc and event focused rather than a process. However, the G7 has now formalised this engagement, adopting the G20's very structured form of civil society groups to create the official engagement groups.



The G7 groups are:

- Civil 7 (C7)
- Women 7 (W7)
- Youth 7 (Y7)
- Labour 7 (L7)
- Science 7 (S7)
- Business 7 (B7)
- Think 7 (T7)

The host government now allocates a small sum to a lead organisation for each Engagement Group to set up working groups and host the Engagement Group’s Summit each year. This allows the Civil 7 to create an advisory group and convene specific working groups to debate and draft up position papers. The culmination of the C7 process is the C7 Summit which this year is scheduled to take place in a hybrid form on the 4th & 5th May 2022. The Summit is attended by members of the civil society working groups and other invited civil society groups, from not just the G7 but from other countries affected by G7 decisions such as African, Latin American and Asian countries. The C7 Summit is attended by a government representative – past C7s have been attended by Prime Ministers and Presidents, but sometimes by Ministers or junior Ministers, depending in what regard the host government holds the C7 that year. Once the C7 has concluded, that is, pretty much, the end of the C7 process.

## Does the C7 Influence the G7?

When considering how to influence the G7 to agree and deliver on specific policy initiatives, how important is the C7?

In short, the C7 is an important element of a strategy but should not be the only activity. A strong G7 advocacy strategy should include

engaging with the C7 process for a number of reasons. Firstly, the C7 Communiqué – the combination of all the various C7 working groups policy priorities, - will be formally presented to the G7 host government and delivered to the G7 Sherpa teams. Having an issue included in the policy platform shows the G7 presidency and the various Sherpa teams that the recommendation is backed by a range of civil society organisations as it is the culmination of a policy discussion process. Secondly, participating in the C7 process, including the working groups, helps socialise an issue with partner groups and can be picked up and integrated into another group’s priority asks.

Another advantage of the C7 process is the actual Summit itself. The event will be attended by the host government, either at a head of government or head of ministry level, allowing for opportunities to meet with government delegates and, possibly, presenting an issue directly to the decision-makers in government. Occasionally, the media will attend the C7 which is another opportunity to raise awareness of an issue and a policy solution or initiative.



Oxfam Big Heads at the G7 Elmau 2015 – All rights reserved, Oxfam Deutschland <https://www.flickr.com/photos/oxfam/17865555653/>

That said, it is important not to just focus on the C7 for creating progress at the G7. Campaigning on the G7 is a two-stage process: stage one is putting forward well researched and credible policy options for the G7 governments to take on-board.



The C7 is part of this stage which tends to go from the beginning of the year through to April (if the Summit is held at its usual time of June or July).

The second stage moves from the policy level to the more public level – putting pressure on decision-makers to address a pressing issue through the media, public mobilisation or a few well staged media stunts. This is often why there are stunts and media activities around the Summits on a range of issues. Oxfam has famously rolled out its Big Heads – large papermaches of the G7 leader’s heads – to highlight a global concern whether corruption, food insecurity or climate change. Greenpeace often stages very visual protests such as hanging banners off power stations or bridges. Other activities include presenting leaders with petitions or other expressions of concern from the public. While this will not get an item on the agenda, the pre-work is still critical – it can help by moving Leaders to go the extra mile and deliver something substantial in the final weeks or sometimes minutes of a G7 Summit.

## Conclusion

While the G7’s place in global governance has changed considerably over the past twenty years, with the rise of the G20, it still remains an influential actor on many global development and climate issues. Therefore, many large and tactical civil society organisation still include the G7 in their advocacy strategies.

However, engaging with the G7 is fluid and opaque as the G7 still operates as an informal group with no set agenda and a changing priority and areas for discussion depend on the host government’s priorities.

The recent formalisation of the C7 and other engagement groups by the G7 governments recognises the importance of dialogue and discussion and the shift from protest to policy dialogue. Having a formal way of putting papers in front of governments is helpful for those engaging with the G7 process. But groups should not be lulled into thinking their advocacy stops at the C7. The C7 process is just one activity to ensure the G7 makes progress on an issue and groups should still work on direct engagement with the right department officials for their issues, across the G7 governments, and be ready for some media friendly stunts and public mobilisation to back up the policy work and put pressure on the G7 to deliver. Taking this multifaceted approach to G7 advocacy will increase the chance of success, but achieving success at the G7 often takes many years of consistent and coherent advocacy to build support and connections in the process to help deliver progress.

## IMPRINT

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