Meeting of G8 Justice and Home Affairs Ministers
Washington - May 11, 2004

Background on the G8

The G8 (or "Group of Eight") is a multilateral group consisting of the world's major industrial democracies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While the European Union is not a member of the G8, EU representatives attend G8 meetings as "observers". The G8 address a wide range of international economic, political, and security issues.

The Presidency of the G8, and responsibility of hosting all G8 meetings, rotates each year, with the order of G8 Presidencies as follows:

2004 United States
2005 United Kingdom
2006 Russia
2007 Germany
2008 Japan
2009 Italy
2010 Canada
2011 France
2012 United States

Origins. The G8 has its origin at an economic summit in 1975 convened by President Valery Giscard d'Estaing of France and attended by leaders from Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt of Germany wanted to establish an informal forum for world leaders to discuss world economic issues. Italy and Canada joined this original "Group of Five" in 1976-77 and the configuration became known as the "Group of Seven," or "G-7." Annual G-7 meetings followed a limited agenda of economic issues, and were intended to provide a setting for informal consultations.

The 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s, the annual G-7 Summits became more formal, with an agreed statement, or Communiqué, issued by the leaders at the conclusion of each meeting. Leaders such as President Reagan, French President Mitterand, German Chancellor Kohl, and British Prime Minister Thatcher brought increasingly broader agendas to the table. (For example, the 1983 Williamsburg Summit, hosted by President Reagan, produced a G-7 agreement to support the deployment of U.S. Pershing and Cruise missiles to Europe to confront new Soviet SS20 missiles.)

At the end of the Cold War, as democratic and economic reform got underway in Russia, Russian leaders were gradually integrated into the G-7. (Former President Gorbachev attended a meeting in the margins of the London Summit in 1991. Likewise, in 1992 and 1993, President Yeltsin was invited to Summits to discuss financial assistance to the Russian economy, and in 1994 he also took part in foreign policy discussions. In recognition of broader Russian involvement, the Denver Summit in 1997 was called the "Summit of the Eight.") In 1998, the G-7's name was formally changed to the "G8," and the first full G8 Summit was held in Birmingham in June of that year.

Work on transnational organized Crime. After the 1995 Summit in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a group of experts was brought together to look for better ways to fight transnationalcrime. In 1996, this group (later known as the "Lyon Group") produced Forty Recommendations to combat transnational organized crime that were endorsed by the G8 Heads of State at their Summit Meeting in Lyon in June 1996. "Subgroups" of the Lyon Group thereafter were formed to address specific crime-related issues (e.g., legal processes for evidence-sharing, high-tech crime, and immigration fraud and human trafficking). In December 1997,

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno hosted the first-ever meeting of her counterparts from the G8 countries and these Justice and Home Affairs Ministers issued their first joint Communiqué.

Subgroup on High-Tech Crime
Among the five Subgroups of the Lyon Group that were created to implement the Forty Recommendations adopted by G8 Heads of State in 1996 was the G8's Subgroup on High-Tech Crime. This Subgroup began with a mission to enhance the abilities of G8 countries to prevent, investigate, and prosecute crimes involving computers, networked communications, and other new technologies. Over time, that mission has expanded to include work with third countries and on such topics as combating terrorist uses of the Internet and protection of critical information infrastructures. Country's are represented in the Subgroup by multi-disciplinary delegations that include cybercrime investigators and prosecutors, and experts on legal systems, forensic analysis and international cooperation agreements.

Significant work of the Subgroup has included:

- creation of its Network for 24-Hour Points of Contact for High-Tech Crime, currently with 40 members, and an international Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Directory;
- negotiation of widely-accepted principles and action plan to combat high-tech crime, subsequently adopted by G8 Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, endorsed by G8 Heads of State, and recognized by other international fora;
- various best practices documents, including guides for security of computer networks, international requests for assistance, legislative drafting, and tracing networked communications across borders;
- assessments of threats and impact to law enforcement from new wireless technologies, encryption, and viruses, worms and other malicious code;
- training conferences for cybercrime agencies from every continent (save Antarctica); and
- conferences for law enforcement and industry on improved cooperation and tracing criminal and terrorist communications, and for all stakeholders in protection of critical information infrastructures.

Changes Following September 11, 2001. In October 2001, senior representative of G8 Justice and Home Affairs Ministries met in Rome to discuss steps for the G8 to take to combat international terrorism and decided to combine the G8's Lyon Group (fighting international crime) and the G8's Roma Group (fighting international terrorism). Since that time, the Lyon/Roma Group has met three times annually in joint session. While continuing important work to combat international crime, the group uses its resources to combat terrorism through such avenues as enhancements to legal systems, port and maritime security, and tools for investigating terrorist uses of the Internet.