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# Global Economy

## Genoa pays high price for violence-torn G-8

By Jorge Pina

ROME - The summit of the Group of Eight (G-8) leaders in the Italian port city of Genoa only produced violence, as there were no positive results for the world's poor nations, according to development-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The three-day G-8 meeting concluded on Sunday just as it had begun: amid violence that devastated broad swaths of Genoa. Official estimates indicate that repairs for the streets, shops and banks, which were damaged or torched, will run near US\$50 million.

Sunday evening, the Italian police raided schools occupied by the Genoa Social Forum, a network of 300 NGOs that had peacefully demonstrated against the G-8 and the model of economic globalization the world's most powerful nations promote. Then, during Monday's early hours, Italy's Carabinieri force arrested 30 foreigners as they prepared to leave Italy, charging them with having participated in the disturbances over the weekend.

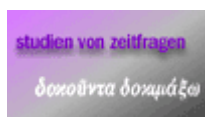
The balance after three days of running street battles between protesters and public security forces was the Friday shooting death of 23-year-old Italian activist Carlo Giuliani, 560 people injured and 219 arrests.

Meanwhile, ensconced in the Ducal Palace, the G-8 leaders had signed the summit's final declaration, in which they underscored the need to fight poverty, saying, "we are determined to make globalization work for all our citizens and especially the world's poor".

The heads of state from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States agreed to continue on the road towards the reduction of foreign debt for developing countries. They also reached accords for fighting organized crime, and for combating drug trafficking in particular. The eight leaders taking part in the Genoa talks decided to create an HIV/AIDS fund of \$1.2 billion, although United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan had stressed that the minimum amount needed annually is \$7 billion.

"There was no progress with respect to foreign debt, only the confirmation of measures that had already been adopted," pointed out

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Luca De Fraia, coordinator of the Italian NGO Sdebitarse, which has gathered 800,000 signatures in favor of annulling the developing South's external debt. De Fraia said world leaders had previously agreed on reducing the debt of 23 countries by \$53 billion, despite the fact that the 41 poorest countries hold a combined \$215 billion in external debt. The NGOs are calling for the forgiveness of the developing world's debt of \$2.5 trillion.

The 40 NGOs making up the Italy-based COCIS network (Coordination for International Development Cooperation) called the G-8 summit "useless". The declaration of principles listed in the meeting's final document "are inversely proportional to concrete efforts", they said in a joint statement. The only effective commitment, the outlay of \$1.2 billion for the battle against HIV/AIDS, is "paltry, and with all probability [those resources] will be destined mostly for the pharmaceutical industry," said a pessimistic Mario Gay, COCIS president. "They did not annul the foreign debt and the entire final document is aligned with the guiding policy of the US administration of [George W] Bush towards the Third World: charity, not rights," said Gay.

Furthermore, the city of Genoa "was left in the hands of professional provocateurs, while the security forces savagely beat the peaceful protesters", he said.

Sabina Siniscardi, of the NGO Mane Tese, commented that the fight against poverty had suffered a reversal because the G-8 did not uphold the commitment that the UN General Assembly had imposed on the nations of the industrialized North to set aside 0.7 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) as development aid for poor countries.

The \$1.2 billion fund for AIDS "is absolutely insufficient for confronting this kind of health emergency", added the activist. "There were no concrete policies from the eight powerful nations, there were only polite words about the fight against poverty," said Siniscardi, head of the Italian office of Mane Tese, a group engaged in development projects in 16 countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

It should be noted, she added, that "the security forces did not attempt to isolate" the militants of the extremist group Black Block, reportedly the instigators of the street violence during the summit. Instead, the police "indiscriminately used violence against everyone, but especially against the movements that were peacefully protesting".

(Inter Press Service)

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