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Dr. Gordon Smith*

Let's move the environment off the back burner. *Global warming is just one of the problems needing international solutions. At next week's G8 summit, Canada can take on a leadership role, says former top diplomat GORDON SMITH.*

The Group of Eight meets in Genoa a week Friday. Given what happened in Seattle in 1999 and at virtually every major international meeting since then, the Genoa summit's organizers and participants are concerned about the prospect of disruptive protests. For Canadians, it will be a taste of what to expect when the G8 meets here in 2002.

It seems hard to believe that, back in 1995, the leaders of these same countries met in Halifax with no problems. Our guests could walk the streets with minimal security, and Halifaxians welcomed them. Something has gone very wrong as growing concern about globalization's dark side has mobilized people to protest.

By now, it has become clear that free trade in goods and services, and the unrestricted movement of capital (whether for investment or exchange speculation), do not produce unqualified benefits. Some protesters may be nothing more than hooligans, but many have serious - if conflicting- concerns that deserve our attention.

The consensus at last autumn's United Nations summit was that globalization needed to be shaped to ensure that more people would enjoy its benefits. The leaders of developing countries were not saying globalization should be stopped; rather, they wanted to ensure that, as they open their markets, the North would do the same. This is not an unreasonable ambition, since the last trade negotiations (the Uruguay round) failed to provide them with the access they expected for their agricultural and textile products.

Protesters are not alone in their mounting concern that the market system will not ensure the provision of "global public goods" such as environmental protection. There's widespread concern that governments are becoming impotent and that large corporations are running the show.

the G7 finance ministers, who at their meeting in Rome called for more transparency, outsider participation and accountability for the IMF and the World Bank

Better global governance is obviously required. But we need specific plans for achieving it.

Last week, the UN issued a report that deserves far more notice than it has received. It was produced by the so

global level. Moreover, Canada has a long history of supporting the development of international institutions and strengthening the multilateral system.

Where to begin? I'd select climate change as one issue where Canada could take the initiative. The U.S. Senate and the Bush administration have rejected the Kyoto agreement and show no sign of backing down; the Europeans, meanwhile, won't give up on Kyoto. Developing countries need more incentives to participate in any international effort to reduce greenhouse gases. Let's help the world devise a market-based system with limits on emissions, carbon taxes, incentives for new technologies and emissions trading. Let's lay the foundations for better global governance of the environment and other aspects of globalization.

Let's do so now. Our future depends on it.

Gordon Smith, former deputy foreign minister, was Jean Chretien's personal representative for the G8 summit between 1995 and 1997. He is director of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria and chairman of the International Development Research Centre in Ottawa.