Divisive issues may overshadow G8 summit.

Internacional | 06-06-2007 | 12:20

There is a so-called ?changing of the guard? on the international scene. There are some new faces in the Group of Eight and some ?old? guards,? who are well established about how to go about the G8 summit and how to get what they want out of it.

The new starters are Nicolas Sarcozy, the French President, and Shinzo Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister. They are coming with a desire to prove other G8 leaders that they are able to hold their own at the conference table. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon is also new to the G8 summit this year. Possibly, the new leader of the World Bank will come as well.

Meanwhile, there are people who hold their last G8 meeting, namely Tony Blair, who is stepping down as British Prime Minister at the end of the month, and probably this is also the last G8 summit for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The outreach delegations are also expected to come, including the Africa group that was invited by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the host of this year?s summit, and outreach members form the so-called G5, these are groups from developing countries, such as China, Mexico and South Africa.

It is expected the leaders will have some informal consultations on Wednesday evening while the formal discussion is due to start on Thursday.

Growth and responsibility are the guiding concepts of the German G8 presidency this year. In this connection, Angela Merkel is determined to give green light to green initiatives. She wants G8 to cut global greenhouse gas emissions by half in 40 years. But in the days leading up to the summit this goal seemed elusive.

?It's important for the G8 to develop a mutual understanding of how to combat climate change effectively and what agreements can be reached beyond 2012. The leading industrial countries will have to lead the way, otherwise, we will not be able to fight climate change," Angela Merkel voiced her stance.

Chancellor Merkel?s confidence has also been weakened by what some call the U.S. attempt to

highjack the climate change initiative.

Just days before the summit, George W. Bush announced his own strategy, which shield away from fixed targets.

?Issuing new proposals just five days before the summit is actually not alternative. This is an attempt to derail the whole process,? believes Tobias Muenchmeyer from Greenpeace.

Another hot issue is Africa. The G8 nations have discussed the continent?s problems many times and yet they do not seem to get away. Germany wants to focus not on the money but rather on how it is spent.

?They are looking at governance, it seems, because it is a cheap issue for the G8 because they don?t have to deliver but put pressure on African countries to deliver. We at the moment feel that the G8 is lagging behind in its commitments,? says Astrid Schwietering from Actionaid International.

Meanwhile, it is feared that the recent disagreements between Russia and the United States will overshadow the summit. President Bush has repeatedly criticised Russia for backing away from democratic reforms.

?In Russia reforms that were once promised to empower citizens have been derailed with troubling implications for democratic development. Part of a good relationship is the ability to talk openly about our disagreements. So the U.S. will continue to build our relationships with these countries and we will do it without abandoning our principles or our values," said Mr Bush in Prague.

Russia, though, retorts, saying it does not want anybody to interfere in its internal affaires. On the other hand, Washington comes in for criticism from Moscow for what it calls double standards and human rights violations.

In this connection, RT political commentator Peter Lavelle says, ?I find it very interesting hear him talk about principles and values when the United States leads unilateral wars around the world. There?s Guantanamo Bay, there?s infringement of human rights in the U.S. Amnesty International has condemned. I find it very curious that the United States is continuing the export of ideology for its own national interests and against the interests of other countries. Russia?s democracy has made a lot of progress since the 1990s, though understanding the process is complicated. I am afraid George W. Bush simply is not informed.?

Actually, the pressure the U.S. is trying to put on Russia can be explained by the fact the United States wants to get access to more natural resources:

?Russia is dividing Europe, and Europe is already divided against itself. When Russia and the EU tried to make a partnership agreement, it failed. Why? Because of this very reason. In fact the U.S. is more interested in the post-Soviet space than Russia is. It is all about resources, oil and gas,? believes Peter Lavelle.

Another point of contention between Russia is the U.S. plans to deploy anti-missile defence systems in the Czech Republic and Poland, which Russia views as a direct threat to its security.
With all this in mind, analysts say the disagreement could overshadow the forthcoming summit, which they predict to be a tough deal for the G8 leaders.

FONT: RUSSIA TODAY

Fuente: Revista de Premsa
Autor: Revista de Premsa