



Foreword by
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It is a fair guess that not many readers of this FIRST special publication had heard of the G20 before it was propelled into the headlines last year as a result of the world economic crisis. After experiments with a slightly larger grouping the G20 was created in 1999 in an attempt to bring together the most important industrial and emerging-market countries from all regions of the world. There will always be argument at the margins about who should be included and who kept out, but the G20 comprises 90 per cent of the global gross national product, 80 per cent of world trade and two thirds of the world's population.

The G20 is in some ways a symbol of the way in which the world is now organised. The G20 has no staff, no legal status and no executive authority over its members. However shaken the world has been by the present crisis it would be surprising indeed if the crucial meeting in London on 2nd April created a supreme world finance authority, able to give instructions to the Treasuries and Central Banks of individual states. Although the Euro zone provides a limited exception, national governments are still keen to keep to themselves the final authority over the

main economic and financial decisions which dominate the lives of their citizens. But at a time of crisis the need to use that authority in concert with others becomes apparent even to the most narrow minded.

The meeting on 2nd April will bring together the different threads of that co-operation. In a world increasingly driven by media in search of sensation we will read much about splits and angry disagreements. But we can see already the convergence of governments on measures which are crucial for all – the stimulus needed by our economies, the obligation to avoid protectionism and the case for tighter regulation to prevent the foolish extravagances of banking systems which have done so much damage.

FIRST is glad to publish this report in order to provide some useful background to the coming discussions. A single meeting will not solve the problems which beset us. We are in for a long haul, which will certainly continue into next year when Korea takes over the chairmanship of the G20 from Britain. But the London meeting should sum up one chapter of the work already done within and between nations and establish a clear framework for the work that remains. **F**