

Australia – 2004

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5. **Ms. Nguyen** (Australia), speaking under agenda item 94 and as the Australian youth representative, pointed out that, in areas of Australia where young [*3*] people were not taken into consideration as social and cultural contributors to their community, the rates of juvenile crime and detention were higher. Compared to earlier generations, young Australians were currently confronted with an overwhelming level of information and complexity. They were often under pressure to make immediate choices, although many had not yet developed the requisite emotional resources. The issues that they faced, however, varied among the various population sections. For many young indigenous Australians, the rates of retention at school remained very low, incarceration rates for young males were much higher than the national average and unemployment was a significant issue. Most youths in that group did not own a computer, although some organizations aimed to reduce the digital divide by creating online communities throughout Australia and educating and connecting young indigenous people. Youths that were marginalized – for whatever reason – were confronted with issues of identity and perception. Never before had the need for community engagement and development been so paramount.

6. Many organizations desired the participation and contribution of young people. However, the methods and language of engagement were often disempowering and resulted in a barrier to effective participation. Young people possessed a plethora of valuable qualities but ensuring their participation was difficult. Investment in infrastructure would make participation meaningful. One of the best ways for young people to participate was community cultural development. Australia was a leader in that practice, and mention should be made of the Foundation for Young Australians, which embraced the principle that, in the new millennium, young people had the capacity and the intelligence to determine what was best for them, provided them with study grants and involved them in decision-making.

7. Although many youth representatives had for several decades addressed the Third Committee and urged its members to include youth representatives in the delegations, the number of total youth representatives to the General Assembly was still smaller than ten. It was essential that all Member States should send a youth delegate to the General Assembly.

