

Australia – 2006

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Original: UN Doc. A/C.3/61/SR.3, 3 October 2006, p. 3-4

Youth Delegate Search: <https://youthdelegatesearch.org/australia-2006/>

11. **Ms. Klein** (Australia), speaking as the youth representative of Australia, said that in the past year she had consulted with young people throughout Australia and listened to their views on issues that were important to them. She had found that education and empowerment were crucial to mobilizing and inspiring young people to take charge of their lives and reach their full potential. The meaning of education had evolved from conventional classroom studies to providing support to individuals that empowered them and gave them the confidence to take up challenges and achieve their dreams. She had witnessed an example of that broader focus in a rural community in Australia where, through a combination of education, peer support and activities aimed at raising self-esteem, young indigenous women had been empowered to overcome a culture of abuse and discrimination to pursue their dreams of finding jobs, finishing school and even attending university. [*4*]

12. She had witnessed the importance of education not only in Australia but throughout the world. For instance, she had been involved in the development of a school for over 130 underprivileged young people in Bamako, Mali. Students at that school were equally motivated to take charge of their lives and break the cycle of poverty. She had also met a group of young men in prison in Australia who had talked about how education had increased their faith in community and improved their self-esteem.

13. Her generation needed to be educated so that it could tackle the challenges left it by the current generation. The most important issue for young people everywhere was that everyone should be equal and should be treated with respect. Young people were powerful, intelligent and wise and a creative resource that must be tapped at what was a critical time in world history. They should not be disregarded because of their perceived naïveté or lack of experience, for that could actually create the drive and enthusiasm needed to bring about change. She urged the international community to include young people in the decision-making process, to educate them and to allow them to grow so they too could make a difference.

