

Australia – 2008

Ms. Shaw, Ms. Poole

UN Youth Delegate Programme

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64. **Ms. Shaw** (Australia) said that in her capacity as a youth representative for her country, she had met with over 5,000 young Australians from different walks of life over a period of five months. A constant theme brought up at those meetings had been the desire of young people to participate in the development of their communities. Social inclusion and civic engagement were basic tenets of democracy.

65. Young people had always sought opportunities to participate within their communities and had blazed trails where no one else had gone before. They had played a vital role in leading social movements in such areas as civil rights, women's rights and higher education and in the anti-war movement. In May 2008, Australian youth had participated in preparations for the 2020 Youth Summit and in setting up the Australian Youth Forum and had developed and administered the largest consultation of young people, in Australia.

66. Young people were not simply the leaders of tomorrow; they were also leading members of their communities today. They must be given the education and skills to enable them to protect the environment and play a role in society so as to make the world more just and promote democracy and multilateralism.

67. **Ms. Poole** (Australia) said that, as she had noticed in her travels throughout the country and in her meetings with youth delegates, young people had many things in common, such as optimism, honesty and the courage to raise questions. They knew that, in a rapidly changing world where violence and discrimination against women were systemic, and inequalities were enormous, fundamental change was needed. Climate change, for example, was very real for young Australians, as it affected them personally, especially in regions affected by drought; however, it was also an opportunity to build a more humane and sustainable global society.

68. Young people wanted to know why the question of climate change was not a priority, why ending extreme poverty was so complex, why trade agreements were respected, but targets for alleviating human suffering were not. They had questions because life on the planet depended on it. They were idealistic because idealism was the force behind change. They wanted to hope and dream and, to be able to do so, they needed to have a voice at the international level and within United Nations agencies.

