

**November 21, 2024, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan** – On November 19, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Safe Migration in Central Asia program, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Turkmenistan, Ministry of Interior, Prosecutor General's Office, and other international and local partners held a landmark event on “Youth Engagement in the Prevention of Organized Crime” to mark the World Day Against Transnational Organized Crime.

The event brought together over 100 young people, including students, volunteers, and members of the Regional Youth Network to promote youth involvement in preventing organized crime and trafficking in persons. This initiative connected NGOs and private sector sponsors to inspire youth-led solutions for a safer world.

Addressing the participants, U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan Elizabeth Rood said, “Since the establishment of the Palermo Protocol and the enactment of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the United States has been at the forefront of the global fight against human trafficking. We are proud to partner with the Government of Turkmenistan to protect vulnerable individuals, reduce forced labor, and prevent child exploitation.”



Dmitriy Shlapachenko, UN Resident Representative in Turkmenistan, noted, “Empowering youth in the fight against organized crime is one of the most effective ways to secure a safer, more resilient future for all. This event exemplified the power of collaboration across sectors—government, NGOs, the private sector, and youth groups—to create lasting change. When young people are informed, engaged, and supported, they become powerful advocates for justice and safety in their communities.”

The event featured a National Youth Competition, interactive sessions with high school and university students, and multilingual discussions in Turkmen, Russian, and English. Speakers from prominent NGOs and private sector sponsors, such as Skechers, Dap, Ish Nokady, and Atavatan News Portal, shared insights into how youth can play a key role in protecting communities from organized crime.

The event served as a platform for youth voices and ideas to inspire real change, fostering a

collective approach across public, private, and nonprofit sectors for community safety and resilience.

The USAID Safe Migration in Central Asia program is implemented by Winrock International across all five Central Asian countries. The program closely collaborates with local governments, civil society, and the private sector to improve migration practices and prevent exploitation. More information is available on USAID Central Asia's website: <https://www.usaid.gov/central-asia-regional/fact-sheets/safe-migration-central-asia>.