

UNDP Celebrates 80 Years of the United Nations and Strengthens Cooperation on Climate and Youth Empowerment in Lebap Velayat

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Turkmenistan, Ms. Narine Sahakyan, and Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Tomica Paovic, visited Lebap velayat to take part in the UN80 Marathon.



“Marking 80 years of the United Nations, marathons were held across all five velayats of Turkmenistan to demonstrate community engagement, solidarity, and the UN’s commitment to peace, healthy lifestyles, and sustainable development,” noted Ms. Sahakyan.

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During the visit, UNDP leadership held a meeting with the Deputy Hyakim of Lebap velayat, Mr. Shohrat Hodjanazarov, to discuss ongoing cooperation under the joint project *“Conservation and Sustainable Management of Land Resources and High Nature Value Ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin for Multiple Benefits,”* funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan.



Reflecting on the meeting, Ms. Sahakyan said: ***"The Aral Sea crisis is not only a challenge for Turkmenistan but a regional and global environmental issue, with cross-border implications for water security, ecosystems, and rural livelihoods. Our discussions with the leadership of the region reaffirm the importance of strategic local partnerships to ensure that sustainable land management and ecosystem conservation deliver tangible benefits for communities, particularly women and youth, while contributing to broader regional resilience."***



Ms. Sahakyan also visited women beneficiaries of the UNDP Aral Sea project, including members of the Beekeepers' Initiative Group, who exemplify how local communities are developing alternative, climate-resilient livelihoods. ***"Meeting rural women is always inspiring. Through technical training, mentorship, and support for innovative, climate-resilient livelihoods, UNDP is helping women enhance their skills, strengthen their businesses, and build resilient communities,"*** - Ms. Sahakyan said. ***"This work not only economically empowers women but also ensures that rural communities are better prepared to adapt to the ongoing challenges of the Aral Sea crisis."***

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Later, Ms. Sahakyan attended the award ceremony for the winners of the *“Green Ideas: Women and Climate”* contest, organized under the above-mentioned joint project. The contest encouraged residents of Dashoguz and Lebap velayats to develop innovative, climate-resilient business ideas that strengthen local economies and promote women’s participation in decision-making.



In parallel, Mr. Tomica Paovic participated in the official kick-off of the second round of the “Future Skills Academy” initiative in Turkmenabat, organized under the *Country Component of the regional project “Promoting Resilient Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) in Central Asia”*, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Turkmenistan. During the event, youth learned about the objectives of the Academy, the range of courses offered, and the application process, as well as opportunities for mentorship and practical engagement.

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The session also featured an interactive employability program designed to strengthen youth's job readiness and prepare them for successful job interviews. Alongside the launch event, a "Connect and Impress" Job Fair was held, bringing together employers, youth, and local partners to foster networking, career guidance, and employment opportunities in the region.



Speaking about the initiative, Mr. Paovic said: ***"The Future Skills Academy equips young people across Turkmenistan with the skills they need to succeed in today's job market. Through high-quality online courses, mentorship, practical opportunities, and interactive guidance for job interviews, we are helping youth build resilient careers and make a meaningful impact in their communities."*** The one-day visit highlighted UNDP's continued commitment to building resilient communities, empowering women and youth, and promoting sustainable development, in close partnership with national and international partners.

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