

*High-level Event at the 14th United Nations Congress
on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*

Promoting rehabilitative prison environments

Tuesday, 21 April 2020, 4.00 – 5.30 pm
Conference Room A



As per the *UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (the Nelson Mandela Rules), the purposes of a sentence of imprisonment are primarily to protect society from crime and to prevent recidivism. Importantly, the Rules clearly stipulate that these objectives can only be achieved if the period of imprisonment is used to enhance the ability and willingness of prisoners to lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives, thereby fostering their social reintegration prospects upon release. The *UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (the Bangkok Rules) complement the application of the Nelson Mandela Rules by paying particular attention to the gender-specific needs of women prisoners.



It is widely accepted today that imprisonment itself does not have a reformatory effect. On the contrary, imprisonment exacerbates the many challenges faced by people who have come into conflict with the law – such as poverty, lack of employment, weakened family and community support networks, mental health care needs and substance use disorders. High rates of reoffending following release in jurisdictions worldwide underline both the need to focus on reducing the inflow into prisons as well as in establishing rehabilitative prison environments.

The objective of this high-level event will be to show-case how rehabilitation and social reintegration support for prisoners can be applied in a holistic manner, as an integral component of prison management and as a core element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A prison management approach that has social reintegration as its central aim will encompass the creation of a safe and healthy prison environment, the positive engagement of staff with prisoners and the encouragement and promotion of contact with family, friends and the community. It will assist with the educational, vocational and personal development of prisoners and address special needs and circumstances which may have led to offending. It will also ensure that opportunities are provided for prisoners' gradual re-entry into society in liaison with community agencies to assist during the difficult period of transition from prison to liberty.

This high-level event, organized by UNODC's Division for Operations, will be moderated by the two Co-Chairs of the Vienna-based Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules (Germany/South Africa). Senior policy-makers and representatives from prison services, academia and relevant organizations will discuss the many dimensions which a "rehabilitative prison environments" should encompass, and how these can be turned into practice.