**Mr. President of the General Assembly,**

**Mr. President of the Economic and Social Council,**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the high-level **presentation** of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, co-hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Government of South Africa. The successful revision of an international standard which has proven to be of such tremendous importance for prison systems and prisoners all over the world is indeed a reason to celebrate.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Member States who – in the course of almost five years of inter-governmental consultations, and assisted by experts from UN agencies and civil society – have joined forces with UNODC in order to render the SMRs fit for the 21st century. The fact that the revised rules are privileged to carry the name of the honourable Statesman and former President of South Africa, is indicative of both their prominence and the continuous support provided by the Government of South Africa. With the Nelson Mandela Rules, Member States now have at their disposal an updated, internationally recognised blueprint for prison management.

Let me also like to take the occasion of today’s event, however, to emphasize the importance of keeping the momentum created by the revision process in shedding light on persons who are at continuous risk of disappearing from the public radar.

More specifically, I invite you to renew the pledge from 1957, when the original version of the rules was adopted, to make these revised rules a reality for currently over 10 million prisoners worldwide. From my part, I can assure you today that UNODC, as the custodian of the Nelson Mandela Rules, will reinforce its efforts in helping Member States to apply the revised rules in practice. Join us in forming a global alliance of Member States, international and regional organizations and civil society geared at the treatment of prisoners in line with international minimum standards, and, most importantly, their human dignity.

I thank you for your attention.