



STATEMENT

BY

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THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN VIENNA

&

CO-CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS
OF THE NELSON MANDELA RULES

**THE PRESENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SYSTEM COMMON POSITION ON INCARCERATION**

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE
GROUP OF FRIENDS OF THE NELSON MANDELA RULES

14:10 – 15:00

17 May 2021

Vienna

*High-level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules
Side Event at the 30th session of CCPCJ, 17 May 2021, 02.10 – 03.00 Vienna time, C0751*

Presentation of the UN System Common Position on Incarceration

Thank you Co-Chair, Ambassador Kunzle of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Ms. Miwa Kato, Director, Division for Operations, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Alexandre Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peace Operations; Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules; Excellencies; Distinguished Guests; Chairperson.

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver the opening remarks on this august occasion. At the outset, allow me to welcome our panellists and participants to this High-level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules for the presentation of the United Nations System Common Position on Incarceration. As a member and co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules, it is both an honour and a privilege to provide this platform to the United Nations System to present this critical Common Position.

As the Members of the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules, we are delighted that the Group's thematic focus is being replicated and further broadened in scope by the United Nations system at large, and that this forum is privileged to be the first platform for the introduction of the UN System Common Position on Incarceration.

Co-chair,

This Common Position on Incarceration is delivered at a very difficult time. Most countries, in particular the developing world, are dealing with challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to destroy lives and livelihoods. This Common Position therefore is critical in reminding us that no one should be left behind, even those who live on the fringes of society and are behind bars.

Our call for vaccines access also encapsulates those who find themselves in conflict with the law. As the late President Nelson Mandela said; "No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." As we reiterate the need for global solidarity in access to vaccines and unity in addressing its impact on crime prevention and criminal

justice, we should pay heed to those wise words in our quest to build stronger and better societies.

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

The formation of the Vienna-based Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules in 2017 has provided us with an important platform to make a meaningful contribution in improving prison condition, ensuring the social integration of prisoners while also impressing upon the important role played by prison staff.

We commend the ever increasing number of members of the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules and encourage other UN members who have not yet done so, to consider joining this Group. Our focus on prison settings is justified by the General Assembly, which extended the scope of Nelson Mandela International Day to promote humane conditions of imprisonment, raise awareness about prisoners being a continuous part of society, and to value the work of prison staff as a social service of particular importance.

We are equally encouraged by the adoption of General Assembly 70/175, which adopted the revised United Nations Standard Minimum Rules and renamed them in honour of our late former President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express South Africa's gratitude to the Justice Section of the UNODC for being the custodian of the United Nations standards and norms on matters of crime prevention and criminal justice through facilitating the practical implementation of the Nelson Mandela Rules. The guidance provided by the UNODC in the form of updated Manuals for the practical implementation of the Nelson Mandela Rules coupled with continuous technical assistance and capacity building to UN member states has immensely contributed to the improvement of prison conditions and management worldwide.

Co-Chair,

As we "build back better", we renew our efforts in not only addressing symptoms but also enhancing our efforts to tackle root causes of over- incarceration, overcrowding, poor prison conditions and re-offending. In this regard, the UN System Common Position on Incarceration is an important step in this direction, showcasing priority areas for UN support which should be replicated by similar awareness, direction and support from our side as Member States.

In conclusion, Co-Chair, South Africa pledges its support, as homeland of the great African icon after which the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners has been named, to cooperate with UNODC and the UN at large to promote

the Nelson Mandela Rules and to give practical expression to the UN System Common Position.

We look forward to the presentations, constructive engagements, and to a fruitful and informative meeting. We express hope that today's event will equally generate interest from other Permanent Missions to consider joining the Group of Friends.

I thank you.