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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

A stylized, high-contrast portrait of Nelson Mandela, rendered in shades of blue and white, occupying the left side of the central banner.

**High-Level
Presentation of
The United
Nations Standard
Minimum Rules
for the Treatment
of Prisoners**

(the Nelson Mandela Rules)

An updated blueprint for the 21st century

New York – Wednesday, 7 October 2015
10:00 am - 1:00 pm
ECOSOC Chamber



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Background

The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMRs) are broadly considered to remain the universally acknowledged minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners. Taking into account the progressive development of international law since 1957, however, the General Assembly also recognized that some areas of the SMRs could be reviewed to reflect the latest advances in correctional science and good practices, provided that any changes to the Rules would not result in lowering existing standards. In 2011, upon the recommendation of the General Assembly, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) established an open-ended intergovernmental Expert Group on the revision of the SMRs.

Under the able chairmanship of South Africa, the fourth meeting of the Expert Group achieved consensus on all of the rules opened for revision, and recommended the CCPCJ to submit the entire set of the revised SMRs for approval by the Economic and Social Council and subsequent adoption by the General Assembly as the “UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners”. It also recommended the rules to be known as “the Nelson Mandela Rules” in order to honour the legacy of the late President of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Furthermore, it was recommended that Nelson Mandela International Day (18 July) be also utilised to promote humane conditions of imprisonment, to 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.

The revision of the SMRs was followed with great attention and commitment by Member States, international and regional organizations as well as civil society, indicating the undisputed standing of the SMRs as the core international minimum standards applicable to the treatment of prisoners. The fact that the review process span close to five years of intergovernmental negotiations exemplifies not only the importance which Member States afford to the SMRs, but also the complex realities and challenges with which prison administrators are confronted all over the world.

Given the above, UNODC and the Government of South Africa decided to jointly convene a high-level presentation of the Nelson Mandela rules. The event will consist of (i) a high-level segment to celebrate the upcoming adoption of this landmark advancement in the normative framework applicable to the treatment of prisoners; and (ii) a technical segment shedding light on the revisions made in the various thematic areas as well as corresponding good practice examples from the national and regional levels.



AGENDA

10.00 – 11.30 am

High-Level Segment

Moderation:

Ms. Simone Monasebian
Director,
UNODC New York Office

Welcome

- **Ms. Simone Monasebian**, *Director, UNODC New York Office* / **Professor Njabulo Ndebele** (per video message) *Chairman of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, South Africa*

Introductory Remarks

- **H.E. Mogens Lykketoft**
President, 70th Session of the UN General Assembly
- **H.E. Oh Joon**
President, UN Economic and Social Council
- **Mr. Yury Fedotov** (per video message)
Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UNODC
- **Mr. Dmitry Titov**
Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions (DPKO)
- **Mr. Ivan Šimonović**
Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Key Statements

- **H.E. Thabang Makwetla (MP)**
Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, South Africa
- **H.E. General Paiboon Koomchaya**
Minister of Justice, Thailand
- **H.E. Dr. Sarah Sewall**
Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, United States of America
- **H.E. Wojciech Węgrzyn**
Under Secretary of State, Minister of Justice, Poland
- **H.E. Guillermo Rishchynski**
Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Corrections)

Observations

Initial high-level observations from the floor



11.30 am – 1.00 pm

Technical Segment

Moderation:

Ms. Simone Monasebian
*Director,
UNODC New York Office*

Documentary

- **UNODC and its work in the field of prison reform** (10 min.)

Introduction to the clusters

- **Ms. Piera Barzanó**, *Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, UNODC* / **Mr. Philipp Meissner**, *Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC*

Cluster I

Prisoners' inherent dignity as human beings

- **Mr. Lucky Mthethwa**
Director, Correction Administration, South Africa
- **Mr. Stephane Ojeda**
Deputy Head of Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross

Cluster II

Medical and health services

- **Ms. Piera Barzanó**, *Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, UNODC* / **Mr. Philipp Meissner**, *Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC*

Cluster III

Discipline and sanctions – Investigations of deaths and torture

- **General Jacek Kitliński**
Director-General of the Central Prison Administration, Poland
- **Mr. Andrés Pizarro Sotomayor**
Expert Lawyer, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Cluster IV

Complaints and inspections – Access to legal representation

- **Ms. Alison Hannah**
Executive Director, Penal Reform International

Cluster V

Staff training, including dynamic security and de-radicalization

- **Mr. Alan Cole**
Head of Global Maritime Crime Programme, UNODC



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Given the time and resources that have flown into rendering the SMRs fit for the 21st century, it will be crucial to support their continued relevance in practice as much as possible, and to assist Member States in applying the Nelson Mandela Rules on the ground.

Within the UN system, UNODC acts as the custodian of the international standards and norms in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, including the SMRs and other relevant standards, such as the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). UNODC has therefore also acted as Secretariat throughout the SMR review process. Building on its mandate to assist Member States, upon request, to apply these standards and norms in practice, UNODC has built extensive experience in providing technical guidance and implementing assistance programmes in the field of prison reform. More recently, UNODC has finalised a new Strategy on Addressing the Global Prison Crisis, which envisages an enhanced engagement in (i) reducing the scope of imprisonment; (ii) improving prison conditions and prison management; and (iii) supporting the social reintegration of offenders upon release. UNODC is therefore ideally placed to assist Member States in applying the Mandela Rules in practice.

For more information about UNODC and its work in the field of prison reform, kindly contact the New York Office and the Justice Section in UNODC headquarters:

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