



**Opening Remarks of H.E. Mr. Oh Joon
President of ECOSOC
at the High Level Presentation
of the “Nelson Mandela Rules”
7 October 2015 10:00-13:00, ECOSOC Chamber**

President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the Mission of South Africa for organizing this high-level event. UNODC’s work in the area of prison reform is invaluable and it has played a central role in the development of the Revised Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The passage of the Revised Rules, I understand, is the result of five years of discussion with numerous parties, including civil society, to create the prison systems of the 21st Century.

I am particularly pleased that, in honour of South Africa’s former President, these revised rules will be known as the “Nelson Mandela Rules”.

I can think of no better reward for the tireless efforts and dedication of the South African government in helping to steer

these rules towards their final adoption later this year at the General Assembly.

The Economic and Social Council has also been closely involved in the adoption of relevant resolutions to revise the Standard Minimum Rules.

The Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, adopted a resolution recommending to the General Assembly the adoption of the Nelson Mandela Rules, at a meeting I had the privilege to preside over last July.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just several days ago, the world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The whole Agenda, with its 17 Goals and 169 targets, aims at ensuring life and dignity for all. However, I would like to draw your attention to a specific goal that is particularly relevant to this issue.

Goal 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

By focusing on prisoners' rights, including access to legal advice, complaint procedures, written prison regulations, as well as investigations into alleged torture, the Nelson Mandela Rules are advancing access to justice.

In doing so, they are building accountable and inclusive prison institutions and systems, and thereby enhancing human rights.

It is also important to note that the Nelson Mandela Rules are part of much wider attempts to break the cycles of prison terms and recidivism.

Re-offending and a life of crime are often handed down from one generation to another, exacerbating poverty and marginalisation in societies. Greater human rights, enhanced education, improved chances of rehabilitation can break these dangerous cycles.

The Revised Standard Minimum Rules represent a significant progress in the treatment of prisoners. Our goal now is to translate these rules into a daily reality for prisoners everywhere.

ECOSOC stands ready to work together in sending a clear message that the high walls of prisons are not a bar to access to justice, and most importantly, to human rights.

Thank you.

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