**STATEMENT**

BY MRS. ASHITA MITTAL, UNODC REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIA ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL NELSON MANDELA DAY

18 JULY 2023

On Nelson Mandela International Day, we affirm our commitment to change the lives of millions of people behind the bar for the better.

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, emphasize that prisoners remain a part of our society. We have a collective responsibility for prisoners’ safe and humane treatment and their social reintegration back to society.

We also value the work of prison staff, who deliver a social service that too often goes unrecognized.

When someone is imprisoned, it has knock on effects on their family and community that can last generations. Our communities are stronger when alternatives to imprisonment are in place, and when bonds are maintained during imprisonment.

As a custodian of the Nelson Mandela Rules, as well as the Tokyo Rules, UNODC has been working in Central Asian countries to ensure safe and humane treatment for over 120 thousand prison population, many of whom come from disadvantaged and marginalized backgrounds. We work on enhancement of capacities of prison administrations and equipment of prison and probation officers with advanced knowledge and skills.

I commend Central Asian Governments for their commitment to reducing the scope of imprisonment, improving prison conditions, strengthening prison management, and supporting the social reintegration efforts for prisoners. I believe, together we can ensure that we maintain the dignity and the rights of those, both inside and outside the prisons.

#PRISONERSMATTER