**Opening Address by Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Ronald Lamola (MP), marking the 30th Anniversary of the Release of Former President, Tata Nelson Mandela, Held at Drakenstein Correctional Centre (Victor Vester Prison), On Tuesday 11 February 2020**

***“In Mandela we see a continuous cause for justice”***

**Minister of Sports Arts and Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa (MP);**

**Deputy Minister of Sports Arts and Culture, Ms Nocawe Mafu (MP);**

**Chief Executive Officer of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mr Sello Hatang;**

**Former Ministers, Trevor Manuel, Vali Moosa and Sydney Mafumadi;**

**Members of the Nelson Mandela Reception; and**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Today we meet on hallowed grounds.

I am honoured to welcome you to this historic place this morning.

There is no question that this great nation stands on the shoulders of a giant.

Today the recommended standard on the treatment of prisoners or inmates across the globe is known as the Nelson Mandela rules these have been adopted by the United Nations.

 The revised Standard Minimum Rules were [adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly](http://www.penalreform.org/news/10071/) (UN-Doc A/Res/70/175) on 17 December 2015.  The revised Rules are now known as the ‘Nelson Mandela Rules’ to honour the legacy of the late President of South Africa, ‘who spent 27 years in prison in the course of his struggle for global human rights, equality, democracy and the promotion of a culture of peace’.

The scenes of former President, Tata Nelson Mandela, walking out of this place, not just as Freedom fighter, but as a father and a husband who had sacrificed every aspect of his life for the liberation of all South Africans, both black and white, defined the birth of a new era, not just in South Africa but also in the rest of the world.

This moment became the catalysts for our constitutional democracy.

It is here where the steps towards a transformed, united and prosperous South Africa began to materialize. It was a moment of triumph of good over evil.

We celebrate this day because it is a constant reminder that in the end, righteous will always prevail over evil. This day also reminds us that our democracy is a product of immense sacrifice.

President Nelson Mandela participated in various forums after his release aimed at shaping a democratic South Africa.

In the 1991 in the African National Congress held a conference under theme: ***People’s*** ***Power for a Democratic Future”*** adopted a policy perspective called ready to govern which affirmed the historical position of the ANC on prisons being places of corrections and the independence of judiciary.

In order for us to reconstruct this nation in the vision of the Freedom Charter we need, not just a capable state, but a state in which a lack of ethics is met with serious consequences.

Twenty five years into our constitutional democracy we have built the institutions as envisaged by the Ready To Govern and the Freedom Charter, correctional centers across the country are now geared towards rehabilitation, an independent prosecuting authority and an independent judiciary.

This moment of renewal calls upon all of to revisit the values that Mandela stood for ubuntu, and selflessness.

Through his own conduct, President Mandela assured the nation and the rest of world that anyone regardless of their social standing must subject himself or herself to judicial process when the need arises.

In the matter ***PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHERS v SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION AND OTHERS 1999:***

Mandela subjected himself to cross-examination at a time when he was a sitting president. This was a clear example of what is meant by the supremacy of our constitution, it was also a firm commitment to the freedom charter’s injunction which says: **“All shall be equal before the law”.**

One can imagine the dismay that former President Mandela would today express if he were to see the manner in which certain people cast aspersions and churn out irresponsible statements against the judiciary.

If a man who endured so much pain and sacrificed a great deal of his life for the realization of freedom and democracy in South Africa was willing to subject himself to a court process, there can never be any sort of justification towards unwarranted attacks on the judiciary and circumvention of the rule of law by any section of society.

There are checks and balances for those who are not satisfied by decisions of our courts, people can appeal.

Decisions of judges are not above criticism, judges criticize each other. Academics criticize judgments, but is done in a fair, balanced, informed by the facts and the law, it is not unwarranted personal attacks on judges.

Personal attacks on the judiciary must be condemned by all citizens of any nation. We must never allow our country to descend to levels of other countries where police, prosecutors or even the judiciary for them to do their job they must negotiate with drug cartels and criminals.

We must never degenerate to a State wherein lawlessness is acceptable.

The consequences of this are palpable and will lead to catastrophic disaster. When that happens, institutions that are intended to serve the interests of society become compromised.

This as we have seen has resulted in complete crippling of state-owned entities that are incapable of meeting their obligations today like the provision of electricity, water, reliable trains and airlines among others.

As a country we must use this moment of renewal as led by President Ramaphosa to reform of institutions and the whole architecture of the state to serve the people, to work for economic growth and rebuild the credibility of the criminal justice system.

The rule of law must reign supreme.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is an era where we will not be silent to allow falsehoods to triumph, we will draw inspiration from Mandela and reconstruct this nation in the image of the Freedom Charter. We will not be derailed any longer, the dreams of our forebears can no longer be deferred.

In Mandela we see a continuous cause for justice, we owe it to his memory to ensure that society live up to the ideals that define the South Africa that he fought so hard for.

In conclusion, let us remember what Mandela said when he walked out of prison:

**“As I walked out of the door towards the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew that if I did not leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I would still be in prison.”**

I thank you.