

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: 1997 Mine Ban Treaty

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines, a nationwide coalition of non-governmental organizations, with respect to the U.S. landmine policy review. Despite the contentious political environment, we again call on you to send the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, also known as the Ottawa Convention, to the Senate for its advice and consent on U.S. accession before you leave office.

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines welcomes most aspects of the U.S. landmine policy announced by the administration on June 27 and September 23, 2014. Under this policy, the U.S. has banned production and acquisition of antipersonnel landmines, as well as their use outside of the Korean Peninsula, and also committed not to assist, encourage, or induce other nations to use, stockpile, produce, or transfer antipersonnel mines outside of Korea.

The 2014 policy measures further align the U.S. with the Mine Ban Treaty, which the U.S. has now set the goal of joining, and represent an important contribution to the rapidly emerging international norm against antipersonnel mines. To enforce their implementation, we recommend that you work with Congress to codify the policy measures into law as soon as possible. We also seek greater transparency on the demilitarization of the U.S. stocks of antipersonnel mines, including information on the types and numbers of mines stockpiled, and the destruction timetable.

There also remains unfinished business with respect to the Defense Department's "high fidelity modeling and simulation effort to ascertain how to mitigate the risks associated with the loss of anti-personnel landmines." We seek more information on the status of this study, including the timeframe for its completion. We have questioned the need for the study when the U.S. has already spent more than one billion dollars on the development and production of systems that could be considered alternatives to antipersonnel mines.

We do not believe the Korea exception is warranted and are concerned that the Pentagon will use this study to justify the continuation of this exception for the foreseeable future. Numerous retired military officers have questioned the military necessity of antipersonnel mines in any future conflict on the Korean



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Peninsula, citing the overwhelming technological superiority of other weapons in the U.S. and South Korean arsenals. As commander-in-chief, it is incumbent on you to make the final decision on this study.

We call on the U.S. to continue and increase its funding and technical support to mine clearance, stockpile destruction, and victim assistance efforts across the world. We welcome the significant recent U.S. funding announcements for the clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war in Colombia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

We note that a number of South Korean civilians have fallen victim to antipersonnel mines that have shifted from their original location in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and into low-lying farmlands due to weather conditions and soil erosion. We encourage the U.S. to support efforts aimed at assisting these mine victims. To prevent more victims, we also recommend that the U.S. consider supporting mine clearance in a section of the DMZ as suggested by the Korea Peace Network of civil society groups.

We sincerely hope it will be possible to conclude the U.S. landmine policy review before you leave office. We would be happy to discuss these and other measures that the U.S. government could take on landmines with your representatives at any time.

Sincerely,

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