



Press Release - For Immediate Release

No Excuse for Lack of U.S. Policy on Banning Landmines U.S. will disappoint at the Mine Ban Treaty summit in Mozambique

(Washington DC, June 19, 2014) Next week, United States officials will be in the embarrassing and unfortunate position of having to tell a high-level meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty that the President Barack Obama's administration has yet to complete its years-long landmine policy review.

"There's no excuse for failing to conclude a policy review that began nearly five years ago, and no excuse for not joining the Mine Ban Treaty immediately," said Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch, chair of the United States Campaign to Ban Landmines, a coalition of more than 400 non-governmental organizations. "Something is seriously wrong when a nation that has not used antipersonnel landmines for more than 20 years cannot take the final step of relinquishing the weapon."

U.S. officials have confirmed to campaigners that the United States will not have anything of substance to report regarding the policy review when it sends a delegation to observe the Third Review Conference of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty hosted by Mozambique in Maputo on June 23-27. Approximately 100 nations are expected to participate in the summit meeting, including some at the Ministerial level.

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines has repeatedly urged that the outcome of the policy review be a decision to join the Mine Ban Treaty as soon as possible, to prohibit the use of antipersonnel mines immediately, and to begin destruction of all stocks of antipersonnel mines. In a [January 31, 2014 letter](#) to President Obama, the leadership of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines reiterated this call.

The U.S. raised expectations globally in 2009, when it formally participated as an observer for the first time in a meeting the Mine Ban Treaty and informed the treaty's Second Review Conference that the policy review was underway. U.S. representatives told the 2012 annual Meeting of States Parties of the treaty that the review would be concluded "soon" and in 2013 [told](#) them the review was "pressing forward to a conclusion."

A total of 161 nations are party to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits antipersonnel landmines, requires the destruction of stockpiled mines, and requires clearance of contaminated land and assistance to victims. Mine Ban Treaty members include all European Union countries, all NATO members except the U.S., all nations in sub-Saharan Africa, all countries in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba and the U.S., many countries in Asia-Pacific, and several nations from the Middle East, North Africa, and former Soviet Union.

[more]

In 1997, the Clinton Administration set the objective of joining the Mine Ban Treaty in 2006. However, the Bush Administration reversed course in 2004. The policy decision is understood to be in the hands of President Barack Obama.

The U.S. has not used antipersonnel mines since 1991 (in the first Gulf War), has not exported them since 1992, and has not produced them since 1997. However, it still retains millions of stockpiled antipersonnel mines for potential future use.

“The financial contributions provided by the U.S. to Mozambique and other affected nations to assist with clearing mined areas are overshadowed by the unwillingness of the U.S. to address the hard question of itself giving up antipersonnel landmines,” said Goose. “The United States can and must join the rest of the world in banning landmines now.”

For more than two decades Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont has led congressional efforts to rid the world of antipersonnel mines and on March 27 he [launched](#) the [first](#) of a series of periodic Senate Floor statements pressing President Obama to allow the U.S. to join the international treaty banning landmines. In a [statement](#) to the Senate on April 9, Leahy asked President Obama how long it will take for him to send the Mine Ban Treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent, which will be required for US accession. Leahy is President Pro Tempore of the Senate and chairs the State Department and Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The U.S. is the world’s largest contributor to global mine clearance and victim assistance programs. Two-thirds of the nations that received U.S. mine action support in 2012 are party to the Mine Ban Treaty including all of its African funding recipients (Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe).

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines is the U.S. affiliate of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, co-laureate together with former ICBL Coordinator Jody Williams of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. Williams, Goose, and other USCBL members will be in Maputo.

Since the U.S. policy review began, the administration has received letters or statements of support for the Mine Ban Treaty from [68 Senators](#), [16 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates](#), key NATO allies, senior military veterans, dozens of leaders of nongovernmental organizations, victims of U.S. landmines, and more than 200,000 concerned Americans.

For more information on the Mine Ban Treaty’s Third Review Conference see:

- Official website: <http://www.maputoreviewconference.org/>
- ICBL website: <http://bit.ly/1ncgcYA>

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