

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



November 1, 2013

STEERING
COMMITTEE

Dear Mr. President:

Last year at the Twelfth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, the United States observer delegation stated during the conference's universalization segment that your administration would announce the outcome of its three-year [now four-year] review of its landmine policy "soon."

In response, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL) held a briefing the next day to discuss the statement and the status of the review. Speaking as a member of the panel, the head of the U.S. delegation and representative of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement indicated that a reasonable interpretation of "soon" meant—at the outside—that an announcement of the decision of the review would take place no later than the next Meeting of States Parties. That Meeting will begin in just one month on December 2, 2013, and we are still waiting on your answer.

We understand that the review has been completed. We are only now waiting for an announcement as to the new policy. We were pleased when your administration began the review in November 2009, and we have appreciated the thoroughness with which the review apparently has been conducted. However, we are also dismayed at the lengthy period of time involved.

Landmines are still a worldwide problem deserving of immediate attention. Since the review began, there have been more than 16,000 new landmine casualties, and ten more casualties occur every day—some of which are the direct result of U.S. landmine use in prior conflicts. While the United States has not used antipersonnel landmines since 1991, there are reportedly some 10 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines retained for potential future use.

Furthermore, U.S. participation is important to the universalization of the treaty. Even though landmine use has been significantly reduced worldwide, a few countries refuse to join—and even continue to use antipersonnel landmines—under the cover that they will not join if the U.S. has not joined.

During the past four years, your administration has received letters of support for this process and for U.S. accession to the Mine Ban Treaty from 68 Senators, nearly 100 leaders of prominent U.S. nongovernmental organizations, key NATO allies, U.S. military personnel, 16 Nobel Peace Prize recipients, landmines survivors, and countless citizens from around the world.

With Poland's ratification of the treaty last year, the U.S. is now also one of only 36 countries in the world that have not joined the Mine Ban Treaty—and is the only member of NATO that is not a State Party, and the only country in the Western Hemisphere, aside from Cuba, that has not joined.

The last steps to acceding to the treaty are now achievable, and vitally important to United States efforts to protect civilians during and after armed conflict, strengthen international norms, isolate irresponsible regimes, and fulfill promises to the international community.

COORDINATOR

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American Task Force for Lebanon

Amnesty International USA

Arms Control Association

CIVIC - Campaign for Innocent
Victims in Conflict

Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America

Friends Committee on National
Legislation

Landmines Blow!

Legacies of War

Physicians for Human Rights

Handicap International-USA

Human Rights Watch

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Open Society Policy Center

PSALM: Proud Students Against
Landmines

Roots of Peace

United Methodist Church General
Board of Church Society

U.S. Conference of Catholic
Bishops Office of International
Justice and Peace

U.S. Fund for UNICEF

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines is an affiliate of the Nobel Peace Laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and as such we are comprised of thousands of individuals and NGOs which represent the myriad American citizens, landmine survivors, international allies, and campaigners from every corner of the globe. We call on your administration not to delay further an announcement of the new U.S. landmine policy—a policy which should be aimed at a comprehensive ban on the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines and ultimately at accession to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zach Hudson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Zach Hudson
USCBL Coordinator

cc: Secretary John Kerry Secretary Chuck Hagel Gen. Martin E. Dempsey