

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to convey our strong support for the Administration's decision to conduct a comprehensive review of United States policy on landmines. The Second Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held last December in Cartagena, Colombia, makes this review particularly timely. It is also consistent with your commitment to reaffirm U.S. leadership in solving global problems and with your remarks in Oslo when you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize: "I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don't."

These indiscriminate weapons are triggered by the victim, and even those that are designed to self-destruct after a period of time (so-called "smart" mines) pose a risk of being triggered by U.S. forces or civilians, such as a farmer working in the fields or a young child. It is our understanding that the United States has not exported anti-personnel mines since 1992, has not produced anti-personnel mines since 1997, and has not used anti-personnel mines since 1991. We are also proud that the United States is the world's largest contributor to humanitarian demining and rehabilitation programs for landmine survivors.

In the ten years since the Convention came into force, 158 nations have signed including the United Kingdom and other ISAF partners, as well as Iraq and Afghanistan which, like Colombia, are parties to the Convention and have suffered thousands of mine casualties. The Convention has led to a dramatic decline in the use, production, and export of anti-personnel mines.

We note that our NATO allies have addressed their force protection needs in accordance with their obligations under the Convention. We are also mindful that anti-personnel mines pose grave dangers to civilians, and that avoiding civilian casualties and the anger and resentment that result has become a key priority in building public support for our mission in Afghanistan. Finally, we are aware that antipersonnel mines in the Korean DMZ are South Korean mines, and that the U.S. has alternative munitions that are not victim-activated.

We believe the Administration's review should include consultations with

the Departments of Defense and State as well as retired senior U.S. military officers and diplomats, allies such as Canada and the United Kingdom that played a key role in the negotiations on the Convention, Members of Congress, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other experts on landmines, humanitarian law and arms control.

We are confident that through a thorough, deliberative review the Administration can identify any obstacles to joining the Convention and develop a plan to overcome them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

GEORGE . VOINOVICH
United States Senator

RICHARD G. LUGAR
United States Senator

JOHN F. KERRY
United States Senator

JACK REED
United States Senator

ORRIN G. HATCH
United States Senator

DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator

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