



Press Release -- For Immediate Release

Landmines “Counterproductive” -- United States Must Join the Mine Ban Treaty

4 April is International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

Geneva, 1 April 2010 -- Funding for mine clearance and victim assistance programs is essential, but is not enough to truly eradicate antipersonnel mines, said the Nobel Peace Laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. “All states should formally renounce the use of antipersonnel mines forever by joining the Mine Ban Treaty, if we are to really rid the world of this barbaric weapon,” said Sylvie Brigot, Executive Director of the ICBL. A major global mobilization is underway to bring the United States on board the Mine Ban Treaty.

The United States initiated a comprehensive review of its landmine policy in late 2009. “The use of weapons that disproportionately take the lives and limbs of civilians is wholly counterproductive in today’s conflicts where winning over the hearts and minds of local populations is key,” said Zach Hudson, Coordinator of the United States Campaign to Ban Landmines. “The U.S. has not used antipersonnel landmines in 19 years and is the world’s largest individual donor for mine action. It is already compliant with other core components of the Mine Ban Treaty. There is no real reason for the U.S. not to join.”

March 2010 was marked by intensive efforts to get the U.S. to join the 80% of the world’s states, including all NATO members, that have already renounced the use of antipersonnel mines. ICBL campaigners met to discuss the landmine ban with representatives from U.S. embassies in over 30 countries, including in Australia, Belgium, France, Norway, and the UK. Landmine and cluster munition survivors in Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Rwanda, Serbia, Tajikistan and Thailand pressed U.S. officials to ban the weapon and provide assistance to mine-affected communities.

In the U.S., leaders from 65 non-governmental organizations sent a letter sent to President Obama on 22 March urging that the policy review result in a decision to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty, and that the President submit the treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent before the end of the year.

Landmines still affect the daily lives of people in some 70 countries. Thanks to mine clearance efforts supported by mine risk education, casualties are declining steadily. “The Mine Ban Treaty is the means to ensure that all consequences of past use of landmines are addressed, and that survivors see their needs met and rights respected,” said Margaret Arach Orech, ICBL Ambassador and a landmine survivor herself. Assistance to survivors, their families and communities is the area where the least progress has been made over the last decade.

The Mine Ban Treaty comprehensively bans all use, production, and trade of antipersonnel mines, requires destruction of stockpiled mines within four years, requires destruction of mines already in the ground within 10 years, and urges extensive programs to assist the victims of landmines.

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Background

Eighty percent of the world's countries (156 countries) have joined the Mine Ban Treaty. Another two states have signed, but still not ratified. China, Russia, and the United States are among the 37 states that have not yet joined. But nearly all of those states are in de facto compliance with most of the treaty's provisions. Every NATO member has foresworn the use of antipersonnel mines except for the U.S., as have other key allies, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Australia, and Japan. In the Western Hemisphere, only the U.S. and Cuba have not joined the Mine Ban Treaty.

Some 44 million antipersonnel mines have been destroyed from stockpiles since the Mine Ban Treaty was adopted; only 13 of the more than 50 countries that manufactured antipersonnel mines in the early '90s still have a production capacity; trade in antipersonnel mines has virtually stopped; and large tracts of land have been cleared and returned to productive use. Landmines still contaminate over 70 states and areas not internationally recognized.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Laureate, is a global network in over 70 countries, working for a world free of landmines and cluster munitions.

As part of the global mobilization to urge the U.S. to join the Mine Ban Treaty, ICBL campaigners contacted U.S. government representatives in the following 60 countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, DR Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kosovo, Kuwait, Japan, Jordan, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia.

International Campaign to Ban Landmines: www.icbl.org
Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor: www.lm.icbl.org