



Press Release

For Immediate Release

April 18, 2012

**Civil Society Leaders Urge President Obama to Conclude Landmine Policy Review,
Announce Intent to Join Mine Ban Treaty**

Washington, D.C.—Leaders from 76 nongovernmental organizations delivered a letter to President Obama urging the U.S. to relinquish antipersonnel landmines and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty without further delay.

The letter follows a request made in 2010 by many of these same leaders asking the President to ensure that the landmine policy review announced by the White House in late 2009 would be timely, inclusive, and aimed at speedy accession to the treaty.

The U.S. has not used antipersonnel mines since 1991 (in the first Gulf War), has not exported them since 1992, has not produced them since 1997 and is the biggest donor to mine clearance programs around the world. However, it still retains 10.4 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines for potential future use and remains an outlier from this widely supported treaty.

"Accession to the Mine Ban Treaty continues to enjoy exceptionally broad civil society support here in the United States," said Zach Hudson, the Coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL). "As this continued dialogue with the President indicates, a vast number of prominent nongovernmental organizations—many of whom have seen firsthand the devastating impact of landmines in the communities in which they work—unquestionably support the total prohibition of this weapon and its lethal effect on civilians."

Since the Obama administration initiated a comprehensive interagency review of its landmine policy in December 2009, the administration has received letters of support for the Mine Ban Treaty from 68 Senators, 16 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, key NATO allies, retired senior military personnel, dozens of NGO leaders, victims of U.S. landmines, and countless concerned Americans.

In total, 161 countries are signatories to the Mine Ban Treaty, including every member of NATO [except the United States], as well as every member of the European Union, and other key U.S. allies such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. is one of only 37 countries in the world that have not joined the Mine Ban Treaty and the only country in the Western Hemisphere aside from Cuba that has not joined.

The letter coincides with the *Lend Your Leg* campaign, an initiative to raise awareness about landmine clearance and landmine survivors linked with the United Nations April 4th International Day for Mine Awareness. *Lend Your Leg 2012* was launched on March 1—the 13th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty—by landmine survivors from all over the world joined by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Since then United Nations officials, politicians, celebrities, journalists and ordinary people everywhere have pledged to "lend their legs" to speak out against this indiscriminate weapon which continues to blight people's lives every day.

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For more information, visit www.uscbl.org.

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About The United States Campaign To Ban Landmines:

The USCBL, currently coordinated by Handicap International, is a coalition of thousands of people and U.S. non-governmental organizations working to: (1) ensure no U.S. use, production, or transfer of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions; (2) encourage the U.S. to join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions; and (3) secure high levels of U.S. government support for clearance and assistance programs for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The USCBL is the U.S. affiliate of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)—the co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize—and is a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition, an international coalition working to protect civilians from the effects of cluster munitions by promoting universal adherence to and full implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.