



Press Release

**December 5, 2013**

**U.S. Once Again Fails to Announce  
Promised Landmine Policy Review Outcome**

WASHINGTON, DC: The Obama administration is failing in its humanitarian duty and failing to keep its promises by its inability to conclude its review of US landmine policy more than four years after it began, said the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL) today.

One year ago, at the annual Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, the U.S. delegation assured States Parties that it would conclude the long-delayed review “soon.” Yet at the meeting today, the head of the U.S. delegation made a statement with no other information than that the policy review is “pressing forward.”

In reaction, Steve Goose, head of the ICBL delegation and executive director of the Arms Division at Human Rights Watch, responded, “The Obama administration has spent another year ignoring this issue, choosing instead to delay a decision on joining a treaty that is saving so many lives every day. There is no excuse for such inaction, and the humanitarian costs it entails. The U.S. continues to opt to stand outside the Mine Ban Treaty, alongside Syria and Iran among others, instead of inside it with all of its NATO and European Union allies.”

At the urging of the USCBL, Sen. Patrick Leahy, landmine survivors, and many others, the Obama administration announced a review of U.S. landmine policy was underway in December 2009. When the head of the U.S. delegation said in December 2012 that it would conclude “soon” he further clarified that “soon” would be consistent with a reasonable understanding of the word, and that he believed—at the outside—that an announcement of the decision of the review would take place no later than the next Meeting of States Parties in December 2013.

“It is ridiculous that the United States has once again deferred conclusion of this review,” said Zach Hudson, USCBL coordinator. “The administration is just not taking this seriously. Yet during the same four years that they have avoided making the decisions necessary to join this lifesaving convention, more than 16,000 men, women, and children have been killed or maimed by a landmine—many by U.S. munitions, and ten more casualties will continue to occur every day moving forward.”

The USCBL has urged that the review result in a comprehensive ban on antipersonnel mines, and overturn the George W. Bush administration’s decision to never join the Mine Ban Treaty. Over the past four years, Obama and his administration have received letters of support 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.

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“The administration’s apparent unwillingness to commit to no further use of these weapons and to destruction of its existing stockpile of more than 10 million landmines is unacceptable—and additionally provides cover for other countries to defer accession and justify future use,” said Hudson. “There is simply no scenario in 2013 in which it is realistic that landmines are the only acceptable or even logical military alternative.”

With Poland’s ratification of the treaty last year, the U.S. is now 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 Mine Ban Treaty, which was negotiated in 1997 and became binding international law in 1999, comprehensively bans the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of antipersonnel mines. It also requires clearance of contaminated land and assistance to victims of the weapon. Of the 161 States Parties, Poland and Finland are the most recent to join.

108 countries are registered at the States Party Meeting—including the United States and 13 non-States Parties participating as observers.

-30-

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*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.*