



Press Release

November 1, 2013

**How Soon is “Soon?”:
4 Years Later and World Still Waiting for Conclusion of
Obama Administration’s Landmine Policy Review**

WASHINGTON, DC: In response to pressure from civil society, the Obama administration began a review of U.S. landmine policy in December 2009. Four years later, we are still waiting for the outcome of that review. Today the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL) wrote the President again to express frustration that no announcement has yet been made.

Last year at the Mine Ban Treaty’s annual meeting in Geneva, the United States observer delegation stated that the U.S. would be announcing the outcome of its then three-year review of its landmine policy—and whether or not it will join the treaty—“soon.”

In response, the 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 December 2, 2013.

The letter to the President states, “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.” It continues, “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.”

November 1 marks the 30-day countdown to the beginning of the next treaty meeting. Campaigners have remained clear that they expect the administration to live up to its commitment and to announce the outcome of the review and the new U.S. landmine policy by the end of the conference on Thursday, December 5.

“It is unacceptable to continue to defer the outcome of this review,” said Zach Hudson, USCBL coordinator. “Landmines still have a devastating humanitarian impact in 2013. During the timeframe of this U.S. review alone, more than 16,000 new men, women, and children have been killed or maimed by a landmine, and ten more casualties will continue to

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occur every day. Many of these deaths and injuries will be a result of U.S. landmines from conflicts past. How can the administration continue to treat this as if it is not a priority?”

The United States reportedly retains some 10 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines for potential future use. 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.

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 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.