

Press Release -- For immediate release

Eleven Years into the Antipersonnel Landmine Ban Time for United States to Join the Mine Ban Treaty

Geneva, 1 March 2010 -- Eleven years after the Mine Ban Treaty became binding international law, activists worldwide are stepping up their call on the United States to join.

The U.S. announced last November that it had initiated a review of its landmine policy. Members of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) are visiting dozens of U.S. embassies worldwide on the 1 March anniversary to urge the U.S. to decide to join the Mine Ban Treaty without further delay.

"We are glad that the U.S. has decided to take a fresh look at its stance on banning antipersonnel mines," said Sylvie Brigot, Executive Director of the ICBL. "During the policy review process, it is crucial that decision-makers listen to the voices of landmine survivors and mine-affected communities."

The United States has not used antipersonnel mines since 1991, has had an export ban in place since 1992, and has not produced since 1997.

"The human cost of landmines far outweighs their military utility. An overwhelming majority of states have formally recognized this," said Zach Hudson, coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines. "The national security argument does not stand. Surely if we have been able to defend our country for the last 19 years without using landmines, we have already found alternative solutions."

The United States participated in an official Mine Ban Treaty meeting as an observer for the first time at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World, in December 2009. It is the world's largest individual contributor for mine action and victim assistance programs, and it should match its financial commitment with a political commitment to end the threat of the use of landmines.

"The urgent need for increased assistance to landmine survivors was among the highlights of the Cartagena Summit," explained Firoz Ali Alizada, ICBL Treaty Implementation Officer and a landmine survivor himself. "Given the magnitude of the challenges ahead on victim assistance, we need all states, including the United States, to commit formally to the Mine Ban Treaty. By doing so they will strengthen the ban on this weapon as the only acceptable norm, and help ensure landmine survivors see their rights respected and receive full assistance."

Adopted in 1997, the Mine Ban Treaty entered into force on 1 March 1999, just 15 months after it was negotiated – the shortest time ever for a modern international treaty. The treaty comprehensively bans all 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.

ENDS

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