



Press Release

**For Immediate Release  
March 22, 2010**

**Civil Society Leaders Issue Letter to President Obama Urging  
U.S. to Join Mine Ban Treaty**

WASHINGTON, DC: Leaders from 65 nongovernmental organizations delivered a letter to President Obama Monday urging the U.S. to relinquish antipersonnel landmines and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty without delay.

In the letter delivered to President Obama, civil society leaders stressed the importance of the ban, and stated, "Landmines are indiscriminate killers, whether persistent landmines or those designed to self-destruct after a period of time. They are triggered by the victim and cannot distinguish between an enemy combatant, a U.S. soldier, a mother working in the fields or young children on their way to school. Past and ongoing deployment of these weapons by state armies and nonstate groups continues to undermine stability and development, exacerbate human suffering and burden many of the world's weak and failing states."

The letter, which first congratulates the administration on initiating the landmine policy review that this group of leaders requested in a letter delivered in February 2009, also urges that the U.S. policy review process is timely, inclusive and aimed at accession to the Mine Ban Treaty. It calls on the President to submit the treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent before the end of 2010.

"As this letter demonstrates, a large number of nongovernmental organizations strongly support the total prohibition of antipersonnel mines due to the weapon's devastating impact on civilians," said Zach Hudson, the coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines (USCBL). "It is crucial that these voices are heard during the current U.S. landmine policy review. Our coalition includes landmine survivors and groups that have been working to eradicate landmines for more than two decades."

The United States began a comprehensive landmine policy review in late 2009 at the direction of President Obama. 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 has not joined the 1997 treaty prohibiting the weapon. In 1998 President Clinton set the goal of joining the treaty in 2006, but President Bush reversed course in 2004 and declared the U.S. would not join.

A total of 156 countries are party to the Mine Ban Treaty, including nearly all major U.S. military allies. Civil society leaders note that the use of weapons that disproportionately take the lives and limbs of civilians is wholly counterproductive in today's conflicts—where winning over the local population is essential to mission success, and that the rest of the world recognizes that the human costs of these weapons far outweigh any perceived military utility.

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Through the work of the USCBL and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), campaigners from around the world have been meeting with dozens of U.S. embassies and U.S. representatives during March to urge the U.S. to ban antipersonnel mines and join the Mine Ban Treaty.

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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.*