

Statement on Universalization
13th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
Geneva, Switzerland
December 2013



Thank you Mr/Ms Chair.

With the addition of Poland as a State Party in December 2012, all of the European Union member states and all NATO members apart from the United States are now on board the treaty. The European Union is a role model for other regional organizations who could follow its example by universalizing the treaty among their member states.

The ICBL is pleased with step taken by **Libya** towards accession. For the first time, Libya changed its vote from abstention to a vote in favor of the UNGA Resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty at the First Committee in November this year. Seventeen other states not party also voted in favor of the resolution, thus clearly expressing support for the humanitarian aims of the treaty.

Several states not party have been attending treaty meetings and many of them indicate that they are actively considering accession. For example, in December 2012:

- **Lao PDR** stated that it will “continue to work hard” to accede and has “organized a regular review on where we are in terms of readiness to accede.
- **Myanmar**, an ongoing user of anti-personnel mines, said that it is reviewing its current status with respect to the treaty.
- **Oman** has been regularly attending the treaty meetings and informally expressed intention to join the treaty.
- **Palestine** declared its strong desire to accede as soon as possible.
- The **United States** said that a decision on its landmine policy review and on accession would be announced “soon.”

However we have not heard of any other concrete steps taken by any of these in the past one year.

The ICBL urges states not party to take the advantage of the Third Review Conference next year renounce landmines and join the treaty. We encourage all States Parties to step up their efforts to bring all others on board, including **Bahrain, Georgia, Laos, Lebanon, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Tonga, United Arab Emirates and the United States**. We also urge all to step up efforts to condemn, prevent and reduce use of landmines by governments and by non-state armed groups.

Over 60 **non-state armed groups** have committed to stop the use of landmines. More than 40 of these groups have signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment, including the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North recently in August 2013. This is another example of the growing acceptance of the norm that prohibits landmines. Activities to engage non-state armed groups in a ban on antipersonnel mines and advocacy on humanitarian mine action should remain a priority for the mine ban community. States Parties should facilitate this process, by providing access for engagement and monitoring by civil society, and supporting humanitarian mine action by appropriate entities. As the UN Secretary General noted in his 2009 report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, “at the absolute minimum, it is critical that Member States support, or at least do not impede, efforts by humanitarian organizations to engage armed groups in order to seek improved protection for civilians.”

This year, ICBL campaigners continued to promote universalization on a daily basis throughout the year and as part of the “Lend Your Leg” global action in some 17 states not party including in **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Georgia, India, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Syria, the United States, and Vietnam.**

At the global level, the ICBL has been reaching out to and calling on all states to join the treaty. In May this year, we conducted our first ever official advocacy visit to **Myanmar** and met with representatives from the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Myanmar Peace Centre, and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. We outlined interim steps, which, if adopted, could bring the country closer to the treaty. These included a declaration of a moratorium on any further use, production and export of landmines.

Following **Syria**'s accession to the Chemical Weapon Convention, we issued a public call to Syria to again urge it to halt mine use and to prevent further suffering and enhance the safety of its people by joining the Mine Ban Treaty.

In June this year we also visited **Taiwan** to celebrate landmine clearance achievements when Kinmen was declared free of landmines. We met with President Ma to urge Taiwan to take a final step toward a complete ban on landmines.

In the lead up to the Review Conference, the ICBL and its global network will continue working closely with the Universalization Contact Group and key partners to further advance adherence to the treaty and the norm, in other words to get more countries to commit to a complete ban on landmines and joining the treaty.

In conclusion we would like to warmly thank Prince Mired of Jordan, Princess Astrid of Belgium and Latin American singer Juanes for their continued efforts in promoting the treaty, as well as the Coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group and all states and partners that are who have been involved in this work.

With your permission I will now hand the microphone over to my colleague from the United States Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Thank you.

The Obama administration is failing in its humanitarian duty and failing to keep its promises by its inability to conclude its review of U.S. landmine policy more than four years after it began.

One year ago, at the 12MSP, the U.S. delegation assured States Parties that it would conclude the long-delayed review “soon.” At a later public briefing, the head of the delegation 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 this Meeting of States Parties.

Yet at the meeting today, the head of the U.S. delegation provides us with no other information than that the policy review is “pressing forward.”

The Bush administration concluded its review in three years. Yet four plus years later, we are still waiting on the Obama administration to complete its *active* and *ongoing* review. Essentially, this 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 notable outsiders, instead of inside it with all of its NATO and European Union allies. The administration's apparent unwillingness to commit to no further use of these weapons and to destruction of its existing stockpile of millions of landmines is unacceptable—and additionally provide cover for other countries to defer accession and justify future use. There is simply no scenario in 2013 in which it is realistic that landmines are the only acceptable or even logical military alternative.

The further postponement of the conclusion of this review demonstrates that this administration is just not taking this process seriously—not treating this process as a priority. Yet during these same four years, 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 continue to occur every day. This issue is important and needs to be a priority.

Thank you.