

From:

Date:

The Honorable Barack Obama

President of the United States of America

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Dear Mr. President,

I wish congratulate you on your election to the office of the President of the United States. Your campaign message of “Yes We Can” inspired millions of people around the world and we hope that this will apply to pressing humanitarian concerns including the need to ban antipersonnel mines forever.

In September 1994, your predecessor, President Bill Clinton, declared a goal of the eventual elimination of antipersonnel landmines. The world responded, and on 1 March 2009 the world will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty.

On this occasion, I urge you to revisit the current U.S. position with regard to the treaty, and to use this anniversary to announce a pathway for U.S. accession.

In these past 10 years, under the treaty’s guidance, States Parties have cleared and returned to productive use large tracts of land; educated mine-affected communities about the risk of antipersonnel mines and other unexploded ordnance; provided support to and protected the rights of landmine survivors; and destroyed millions of stockpiled antipersonnel mines, ensuring they can never be planted in the earth again. Use of antipersonnel mines is now the exception rather than the rule, and the trade in these weapons has virtually stopped. Thanks to the treaty, the number of new landmine casualties has steadily decreased, as thousands of people have been spared their lives and limbs.

Today 156 countries – 80% of the world’s states – are party to the Mine Ban Treaty, including the United States’ closest allies. These states long ago renounced the use of these indiscriminate weapons, recognizing that their devastating humanitarian impact far outweighs any limited military advantage that could derive from them.

Indeed, U.S. forces have also been moving away from using antipersonnel landmines, with the last recorded use in 1991 and no production since 1997. Joining the Mine Ban Treaty would also be consistent with the United States’ role as the main funder of humanitarian demining programmes in the world.

While we are calling on the USA to join the treaty without delay, we realize that accession might take some time. There are however a number of interim steps which your administration could take to signal movement in this direction, including expressing support for the annual UN General Assembly resolution on implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty and participating in the treaty’s Second Review Conference, which will take place in Cartagena, Colombia from 30 November to 4 December 2009.

I look forward to hearing that your administration will be heeding President Clinton’s call and revising its policy with the aim to join the Mine Ban Treaty as soon as possible.

Sincerely,