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*****PRESS RELEASE*******

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United States Changes Mine Ban Stance, Announces Steps Towards Mine Ban Treaty Accession

(27 June 2014, Maputo, Mozambique) – The United States announced today it intends to join the Mine Ban Treaty in the future and will not produce antipersonnel mines. Speaking at the Third Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, US Ambassador to Mozambique, Douglas Griffiths, said the US is pursuing solutions that would allow the country to accede to the treaty. The Ambassador also recommitted to cooperation with States Parties and NGOs in undertaking global mine action efforts.

“With this announcement, the US has changed its mine ban stance and has laid the foundation for accession to the treaty. The message to the international community is clear, the Mine Ban Treaty is the only solution to eliminate the suffering caused by landmines,” said International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) Head of Delegation, Steve Goose.

However the announcement today by the US does not go nearly far enough. No target date has been set for accession by the US, and no final decision has been made on whether to join the treaty. The US is reserving the right to use its 10 million antipersonnel mines anywhere in the world until the mines expire. The ICBL calls on the US to commit to no use until it accedes and to begin destruction of one of its landmine stockpiles.

The announcement follows strong declarations by States Parties this week of renewed commitment to the treaty. Seventy-nine States Parties participated in the meeting and signed the Maputo Declaration with a target date of 2025 for completion of their treaty obligations including stockpile destruction, clearance of mined areas on their territory, and adequate assistance to landmine victims.

The ICBL has issued a Completion Challenge to States Parties, asking them to commit to complete all major treaty obligations within the next decade. “Inspired by Mozambique, states have recommitted this week to turning into reality the promise of the Mine Ban Treaty to eliminate the global threat of antipersonnel landmines. The Maputo Action Plan adopted today provides a roadmap for what needs to happen during the next five years to achieve a world without landmines,” said ICBL-CMC Executive Director, Sylvie Brigot-Vilain.

The Maputo Declaration, including the target completion date of 2025, was agreed by Mine Ban Treaty countries following a week of clearly articulated commitments to achieve a mine-free world within the next decade. A 31-point work plan approved by states recognizes that there is much more to do and strongly asserts that completion in a decade *can* be done through states working harder and better.

The participation of 12 states not parties to the treaty, including China, India and the United States, at the Third Review Conference demonstrated the strength of the global norm banning landmines.

Oman has recently announced plans to join as early as next month.

Unofficially, China has indicated that it has been steadily destroying what has been considered the largest stockpile of the weapon globally. Landmine Monitor previously estimated the number of China's stockpiles at some 110 million mines (based on Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons reporting from the

1980s). Exact stockpile figures were not provided by Chinese Delegates, however the number was said to be less than five million. If confirmed, this would represent a massive reduction in the number of estimated landmine stockpiles globally.

Greece committed to completing destruction of all stockpiles of the weapon by 2015 – a very positive development. Along with Ukraine and Belarus, Greece has been in non-compliance of the treaty for some years for failing to meet its stockpile destruction deadline. Both Greece and Belarus announced destruction was now underway and would soon be destroying thousands of mines per day.

“The ICBL believes that the end to contamination in States Parties is in sight. Most should be able to complete clearance of antipersonnel mines in their territory in five years, and all within 10 years. To make this happen, states will need to focus on clearing truly contaminated areas so they can finish the job,” said Tamar Gabelnick, ICBL Policy Director.

Four countries (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Yemen and Zimbabwe) were granted extended deadlines for mine clearance. A fifth, Ethiopia, announced earlier this year it could not meet its June 2015 deadline, but did not request an extended deadline as would have been required. Ethiopia will therefore be in violation of the treaty if it does not complete clearance by June 2015.

Allegations of mine use are a serious concern that demand immediate attention in order to safeguard the hard won victories of the Mine Ban Treaty. State Party Yemen addressed recent instances of mine use, stating that the Military Prosecutor’s Office has begun an investigation to identify those responsible, also noting that clearance and mine risk education efforts have begun and assuring that this egregious violation of the treaty is being taken seriously.

States Parties Sudan and Turkey responded to ongoing use allegations during the meeting; Sudan announced creation of an investigative committee while Turkey provided details of investigations of previous allegations of mine use, including a 2009 incident, which cost the lives of 7 soldiers.

The priority now given to and the advances in victim assistance under the Mine Ban Treaty are a clear result of States Parties’ commitment. In 1999, some 26,000 people were killed or injured by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) each year. Today, there are fewer than 4,000 recorded casualties.

In spite of this, many survivors are still waiting to benefit from the services they are entitled to as a matter of human rights. Survivors’ statements by ICBL members on the closing day of the meeting clearly demonstrated the work to be done.

“While Mozambique is completing its mine clearance obligations this year, the pernicious effects of mines have longstanding repercussions in the lives of victims,” said ICBL member and Mozambican landmine survivor Luis Wamusse. “Countries must adopt national action plans for victim assistance which ensure survivors a life of dignity where their rights are respected and they have opportunities to enjoy full participation in society.” The ICBL calls on States Parties to immediately implement the Maputo Action Plan especially regarding access to services for all landmine survivors.

According to the research of the Landmine Monitor, meeting the challenge of a mine-free world is not only possible, it is entirely within reach through renewed determination, sufficient resources, and the use of good practices. The dream of no more contaminated land, no new mine casualties, and a world where survivors are assured of the services they need, is steadily becoming a reality; the ICBL urges states to rise to the challenge and make it happen within a decade.

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For more information contact:

Jared Bloch, Media & Communications Manager, Tel: +41 786 83 4407, Email: jared@icblcmc.org.

Links:

Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor:

For more facts on landmine and cluster munitions issues globally, and to view detailed country profiles, visit <http://www.the-monitor.org/index.php>

ICBL Website - <http://www.icbl.org>

ICBL on Flickr - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/minefreeworld/collections>

ICBL Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/minefreeworld>

ICBL Twitter - <https://twitter.com/minefreeworld>

[Media pack with global landmine maps, ICBL statements and background information.](http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/the-treaty/treaty-meetings/review-conferences/the-third-review-conference-of-the-mine-ban-treaty.aspx)

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