

March 1st Action Alert - Country backgrounder

Making the Mine Ban Treaty Universal: Mission possible

Poland

Mine Ban Treaty Status	Signatory since 1997
Stockpiles	Almost one million (984,690)
Contamination	Landmines and ERW after the two World Wars
Estimated area of contamination	Residual contamination from WW I and II
Estimated mine/ERW survivors	Unknown
Availability of services for mine/ERW	Adequate
Vote on UNGA resolution on the MBT	Voted in favour since 1997
Reasons for not ratifying	Need to develop alternatives for defence before getting rid of antipersonnel mines
Key recent developments	<p>The latest transparency report voluntarily submitted by Poland latest voluntary transparency report states that from 2008 to 2012, 750,000 of its stockpiled mines will be withdrawn from arsenals and destroyed.</p> <p>In 2008, Poland declared it would ratify the MBT in 2012, three years earlier than the previously set deadline (2015).</p>

For more information see Landmine Monitor Report on Poland 2008 at www.icbl.org/lm

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Ten years after the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT), on 1 March 1999, we have no doubt that our goal of a mine free world can be achieved and should be pursued until it becomes a reality. Over the past years, the number of countries joining the treaty has continued to grow (from 71 in March 1999 to 156 in 2009), and many states still remaining outside the treaty are *de facto* already respecting its provisions.

We believe that there is no better way to celebrate the anniversary – and the upcoming Second Review Conference of the treaty, which will take place in Colombia in December 2009 – than by multiplying our efforts to bring on board the treaty more states, and encourage others to take positive steps in this direction. Join our global action on universalization and help us prove that this is “Mission Possible”!

Getting Poland on Board: Mission Possible

Poland was one of the original 122 signatories of the Mine Ban Treaty, which clearly signalled its will to contribute to the goal of freeing the world from “the suffering and casualties caused by antipersonnel mines”. Over 80% of Poland’s territory was contaminated with landmines and other explosive remnants of war as a result of the II World War. Over 80 million of mines have been cleared in the post-war period. Since 1945 mines have claimed the lives of over 4,000 Polish civilians and caused injury to more than 8,000.

Today Poland remains one of only two remaining signatories not to have ratified the treaty (the other one is the Marshall Islands). Poland (together with Finland) is also one of only two members of the enlarged European Union (EU-27) not to have joined the MBT. As a signatory Poland is prohibited to use antipersonnel landmines but in reality it remains ready to use them.

At the MBT’s First Review Conference in 2004, Poland announced that it was finally “ready to ratify” and the ratification was supposed to be completed by 2006. A change in government led to a change in policy which, however, does not reflect any real change in the security environment around Poland. The main reason why Poland has not ratified the MBT yet is because it believes it needs to have alternative means of defence before doing so. However, this argument does not seem to be relevant any longer as Poland has already decided to destroy the majority of its stockpiled APs.

Reasons for Poland to ratify the MBT now

- ⇒ By ratifying the treaty without delay and becoming a state party by the 2nd Review Conference or at least announcing at the Conference it has started the process, Poland would prove it is serious about the commitment it made in 1997 and restated in 2004.
- ⇒ Poland does not currently rely on antipersonnel mines for its defence of the national borders or of military bases abroad. It does not produce, sell or buy antipersonnel mines, which means it is already *de facto* complying with most treaty provisions. However, *de facto* compliance is not good enough – only when all countries agree to be irrevocably bound by the treaty we can be sure that antipersonnel mines will never claim the lives and limbs of innocent people ever again.
- ⇒ Poland is already planning to destroy over three quarters of its stockpiled antipersonnel mines over the next four years. This seems to contradict the main reason given so far for delaying ratification (i.e. The need to have alternative means of defence).
- ⇒ The regional security situation is different from what it was in the past! As a member of NATO, Poland can also rely on its allies for security and defence.