



US landmine policy change, a dangerous step forward

Geneva, 3 February 2020 – The announcement that the United States of America – which has not used anti-personnel mines for nearly three decades – is allowing “planning for and use” of these weapons in future conflicts “is a step in the wrong direction”, said the President of the Convention on the Prohibition on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines, known as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (*informally, Ottawa Convention or Mine Ban Treaty*),

“The United States’ change of policy is unfortunate. While the US is not a State Party to this landmark humanitarian disarmament treaty, deviation of what has been **its *de facto* and official policy for nearly thirty years** can only drift the US further apart from 80% of the world’s States who have committed to protect civilians from these treacherous weapons.

All but two of the US’ Collective Defence Agreements’ allies are States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Therefore, they are legally bound ‘*to never under any circumstances use, transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines; assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.*’ These States include, all US allies in the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO), South East Asia Treaty, Japanese and Philippines Treaties, Agreement with Australia and New Zealand, and all but one (Cuba) in the Rio Treaty.

This change in US Policy goes against its long-standing commitment to work towards the eradication of the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.”

President of the Convention H.E. Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed,
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the UN in Geneva

“The statement that anti-personnel mines ‘remain a vital tool in conventional warfare that the United States military cannot responsibly forgo,’ is bizarre considering that since prior to the Convention entering into force 20 years ago the United States, under Republican and Democratic leaderships, forwent their use, production and transfer”, said the Convention’s Secretariat Director Juan Carlos Ruan.

“Rolling back its policy is a risky signal that can encourage hold-out states to also bypass the global norm, and puts the US dangerously close to those few in the world who have made use of this weapon in recent times. The Convention has long professed that any perceived or limited military utility of anti-personnel mines is grossly outweighed by the humanitarian consequences of their use. There is no such thing as responsible use of anti-personnel mines”, added the Convention’s Secretariat Director.

A 2019 civil society report by the Landmine Monitor indicates that 71% of the more than 6,000 recorded casualties of mine and other explosive remnants of war were civilians, with children making up a disproportionate 54% of this figure. The Convention’s norms are strongly respected by most States that have not yet joined while its States Parties have successfully destroyed nearly 53 million stockpiled mines. Mine decontamination has also been successful, with 30 countries having declared they are now mine-free. A number of these countries successfully achieved their goals with support of the international community, including the United States of America.