

Geneva, 17 January 2025

**H.E. Mr. Gintautas Paluckas**  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania  
Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania  
Lithuania

Via: [lrv.kanceliarija@lrv.lt](mailto:lrv.kanceliarija@lrv.lt); [gintautas.paluckas@lrv.lt](mailto:gintautas.paluckas@lrv.lt)

*Re: Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – urgent meeting request*

Dear Prime Minister Paluckas,

I am writing on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a global civil society network working for a world free of mines, and co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, to express our deep concern over your recent proposal to debate in the State Defence Council the withdrawal of Lithuania from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). In addition to our messages below, I would like to also respectfully request a meeting with you and other decision-makers on this matter at your earliest convenience.

We understand that the use of antipersonnel landmines and withdrawal of membership from the Convention are part of the current military preparedness assessment being undertaken by the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense. We certainly recognize the need for Lithuania to take all necessary measures to ensure a robust defense in light of the current security situation. But we strongly believe that antipersonnel mines should never be part of any modern military's arsenal, and we urge you in the strongest possible terms to remain committed to the Mine Ban Convention and its humanitarian principles. Our arguments stem from a deep concern for the well-being of Lithuanian civilians, who are at greatest risk from the use of mines on Lithuanian territory, as well as for the countless civilians globally that would suffer from any decision to further erode the fabric of international humanitarian law and a rules-based international order.

As you are aware, anti-personnel landmines are inherently indiscriminate weapons that violate the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. They cannot distinguish between combatants and civilians and remain active for decades, causing devastation long after conflicts have ended. They are also inhumane, causing abhorrent injuries to the human body that almost always cause lifelong disability, if not death. Over the years, these mines have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent men, women, and children, while injuring and maiming countless more, perpetuating cycles of poverty, fear, and instability.

On these grounds, antipersonnel mines were banned by the 1997 Mine Ban Convention, which remains a cornerstone of the global efforts to address the humanitarian harm caused by anti-personnel mines. As one of the most successful instruments of international humanitarian law, the Mine Ban Convention has set the gold standard for humanitarian disarmament and has since served as a model for similar conventions. By joining the AP Mine Ban Convention in 2003, Lithuania aligned itself with 163 other states committed to ending the use of these inhumane weapons and demonstrated laudable support for these shared goals.

A decision to withdraw from the Convention would therefore represent a reversal of Lithuania's principled stance and a setback for global disarmament and humanitarian efforts. Moreover, it would raise significant questions about Lithuania's commitment to multilateral agreements and international humanitarian law, undermining its good standing as a responsible member of the international community committed to the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, as well as EU's core values and commitments. Withdrawal from the APMBC would not only tarnish Lithuania's

reputation but could also embolden other states or non-state actors to challenge the norms established by the Convention, undermining decades of progress in stigmatizing the use of anti-personnel mines.

Your advice notes that leaving the APMBC would “strengthen national defence and deterrence,” but the ICBL would argue that such a decision would undermine the security of the Lithuanian population without providing any meaningful security in return. As noted above, landmines are indiscriminate weapons that will pose a long-lasting, mortal risk to Lithuanian communities for decades after any conflict or military threat has ended. As well, in the late 1990s, the vast majority of the world’s militaries decided that any marginal military utility from AP mines was far outweighed by the risk they posed to civilians and their own soldiers. A 1996 ICRC study entitled Friend of Foe: A study of the military use and effectiveness of anti- personnel mines noted “Establishing, monitoring and maintaining an extensive border minefield is time-consuming, expensive and dangerous. In order to have any efficacy at all they need to be under continuous observation and direct fire... Moreover, these minefields have not proved successful in preventing infiltration.” In the report, Former US Marine Corps Commandant Alfred Gray noted: “I know of no situation ... where our use of mine warfare truly channelized the enemy and brought him into a destructive pattern. I’m not aware of any operational advantage from [the] broad deployment of mines.”

You also note in your advice that “a unified stance among Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Finland, and Sweden would strengthen deterrence and demonstrate a shared regional approach to defence.” But all of these countries, along with all members of the European Union, as well as all NATO members except the United States, are part of the APMBC and eliminated mines from their arsenals long ago for the reasons mentioned above. The United States has not used mines since 1991, and current policy forbids use outside the Korean peninsula. The only governments currently using AP mines are Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, and Russia, and we imagine that Lithuania would not choose to align itself with the military values of those countries.

Finally, a withdrawal could also signal Lithuania’s lack of confidence in the security provided by NATO membership. As well, all States Parties to the APMBC are prohibited from using or assisting, encouraging or inducing, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party. So any planned use of AP mines by Lithuania could create challenges for its allies in the context of a joint operation.

In closing, we urge you and the Government of Lithuania to reject any contemplation of withdrawal from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Such a step would have profound humanitarian, ethical, and reputational consequences. The decision to stay in the Convention, on the other hand, would affirm Lithuania’s dedication to protecting lives, upholding international law, and maintaining its leadership in disarmament efforts.

The ICBL remains ready to work together with Lithuania in the framework of the APMBC, and we hope to continue to count on Lithuania as a steadfast partner in our pursuit of a mine-free world.

Yours sincerely,



Tamar Gabelnick  
Director  
International Campaign to Ban Landmines

CC: H.E. Mr. Darius Staniulis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations in Geneva