

H.E. Mr. Donald Tusk
Prime Minister of Poland
Chancellery of the Prime Minister
Warsaw, Poland

Geneva, 13 March 2025

Subject: Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – urgent meeting request

Dear Prime Minister Tusk,

We are writing on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a global civil society network working for a world free of landmines and co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, to express our deep concern over Poland's consideration of withdrawing from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

We urge you and the Government of Poland to reject any consideration of withdrawal from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and to strongly discourage any other European countries that may be contemplating withdrawal. Leaving the Convention would have profound humanitarian, ethical, and diplomatic consequences, placing Poland among the few countries that continue using these barbaric weapons. Your past leadership in joining the Convention was a milestone for Poland and the international community, and we need your continued leadership to ensure that the Mine Ban Convention remains a cornerstone of humanitarian disarmament.

In addition to our messages below, we would like to respectfully request an urgent meeting with you and other key decision-makers on this matter at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter further. Please note that similar letters have been sent to the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland. Given the potential humanitarian, military, and diplomatic consequences of such a decision, we believe a direct dialogue would be crucial.

We understand that possible withdrawal from the Convention and potential future acquisition of anti-personnel landmines are to be assessed by the Polish Ministry of Defence. In the light of current security situation, we understand Poland's need for strong defense measures. But the international community long ago decided that there must be limits on the methods of warfare to protect civilians from the most egregious effects of armed conflict. Not all options should be on the table, and some lines must never be crossed. Just as the nations committed to reject the use of biological and chemical weapons, Poland, Europe, and the rest of the civilized world must continue to reject anti-personnel mines. These weapons are banned for the same reasons - they are inhumane, indiscriminate, and have devastating long-term consequences for civilians.

For a military to go back to outdated weapons from the Cold War era instead of seeking the latest technology does not project strength, but rather weakness and desperation. Historical evidence and modern technological advancements have demonstrated that anti-personnel mines provide little military advantage while imposing significant risks and costs, both to civilians and their own soldiers. Several studies conducted by former military officers have shown that AP mines are ineffective at stopping a determined army from crossing borders or otherwise gaining its objectives, noting that border minefields must be covered by observed aimed fire, and that any minefields around the defensive positions soon generate a loss of tactical flexibility. On the other hand, modern military technology—drones, sensors, satellite surveillance, and electronic warfare systems—has rendered anti-personnel mines obsolete. These advances allow for more precise and effective border monitoring and area denial without the risks landmines pose to civilians and one's own soldiers. Instead of AP mines, they types of systems a country seeking to reassure its population should be investing in.

It is also worth noting that obtaining new anti-personnel mines would be challenging as no NATO country produces AP mines. The only anti-personnel mines available for transfer would be outdated U.S. stockpiles, raising concerns about reliability and effectiveness. Reintroducing domestic production of landmines would require substantial financial investment, training, and infrastructure—all for a prohibited and stigmatized weapon. Furthermore, all European Union member states and all NATO members—except the United States—are parties to the Convention, meaning any planned use of anti-personnel mines by Poland could also create operational challenges for its allies in joint military operations. It is worth noting that the only governments currently using anti-personnel mines are Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, and Russia. We trust that Poland would not wish to align itself with the military practices of these nations.

A decision to withdraw from the Mine Ban Convention would represent a significant reversal of Poland's principled stance and a setback for global disarmament and humanitarian efforts, aligning Poland with those who violate international norms rather than those who defend them. Moreover, it would raise serious concerns about Poland's commitment to multilateral agreements and international humanitarian law more generally, potentially damaging its reputation as a responsible member of the international community. Withdrawal from the APMBC would not only tarnish Poland's reputation but could also embolden other states to challenge the norms established by the Convention, undermining decades of progress in stigmatizing the use of these weapons.

Prime Minister, it was you and your government that took the commendable decision to join the Convention in 2012, aligning Poland with the rest of the European Union. You rightly pointed that anti-personnel mines are inherently indiscriminate and cause horrific injuries and death, mainly to civilians. You are surely aware that if the worst-case scenario transpired and Polish forces used mines in its defense on Polish soil, the mines would continue to kill and maim innocent Polish civilians long after the conflict ended, just as it did for many years after the end of the Second World War. Today we urge you not to let the rational fears of the Polish people create irrational policy decisions that will have wide-reaching and highly damaging consequences. There are better, safer, and more strategic modern ways to ensure Poland's security.

Prime Minister, in the lead-up to this historic and long-awaited decision to ratify the Convention, the ICBL worked very closely with your government, and we remain deeply grateful for your leadership and engagement in this matter. Your decision at the time sent a strong signal to the international community that Poland stood firmly against the use of these inhumane weapons and was dedicated to the protection of civilians and upholding international humanitarian law. The ICBL remains ready to continue working with Poland in the framework of the APMBC, and we sincerely hope to continue counting on Poland as a steadfast partner in our shared mission for a mine-free world.

Sincerely,



Tamar Gabelnick
Director, ICBL



Kasia Derlicka-Rosenbauer
Deputy Director, ICBL

CC:

H.E. Mr. Mirosław BROIŁO, Chargé d'affaires a.i., Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations, Geneva