



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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October 28, 2010

Mr. Thomas E. Donilon
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Donilon:

Congratulations on your appointment as National Security Adviser. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a long history of addressing international concerns based on our social teaching and on our relationships with the Church throughout the world. One issue of concern to the Catholic Church is the Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, otherwise known as the Ottawa Convention or the Mine Ban Treaty.

The Conference of Bishops has for a long time urged the United States to sign and ratify the Mine Ban Treaty. Our views are grounded in Church teaching that calls for a ban on landmines on moral grounds since they are indiscriminate weapons that kill and maim innocent civilians during and long after hostilities end. There is a legacy of devastation in places such as Laos, Angola, Colombia, and Lebanon. Indeed, the Holy See has noted the “deplorable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines.”

Pope Benedict XVI, in a statement to the December 2009 Cartagena Summit on anti-personnel mines, praised “the obligations set out in the [Ottawa] Convention, particularly with regard to assistance to the victims, the destruction of arsenals and the clearing of mines in the affected regions.” The Holy See appealed to all nations to join the 156 countries that have already adopted this convention, which has been in force since 1999. We join in this call.

President Barack Obama has shown leadership in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been working hard to support the ratification of the New START Treaty. Please advise and urge President Obama to exercise his leadership in the area of landmines by acceding to the Ottawa Convention. It is time for our country to demonstrate its commitment to ridding the world of these weapons which cause long-term, irreparable, and indiscriminate harm.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International
Justice and Peace