Statement to First Committee
Zach Hudson, International Campaign to Ban Landmines
October 24, 2011

Thank you Mr. Chair,

Delegates and Colleagues,

I am pleased to speak on behalf of our global network of non-governmental organizations in some one hundred countries, working towards a mine-free world: the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

We welcome the numerous references of support to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty made here in First Committee statements, which reaffirm our common commitment to the goal of eliminating landmines. Indeed, the job of ridding the world of antipersonnel mines is not done yet. Thanks to the Mine Ban Treaty, which took effect in 1999, the use of antipersonnel mines has dramatically decreased, land affected by landmines continues to be cleared in dozens of countries, and there are fewer landmine casualties each year. But we still need your attention, dedication and action to push for progress and ensure antipersonnel mines are completely eradicated.

The job is not done yet but it is doable. Landmines still continue to impact the lives of people in some 70 countries. Landmine survivors of the weapon still struggle to meet their most basic needs and for their rights to be respected by all. The ICBL is alarmed that this year antipersonnel mines have been used by three governments - Israel, Myanmar, and the forces of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, as well as non-state armed groups in a handful of countries. We call on all states to condemn antipersonnel mine use and call on all states not party, especially landmine users to renounce this weapon and join the Mine Ban Treaty.

When states met in Cartagena, Colombia, for the Second Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, in 2009, they reaffirmed the goal of ending the suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines, including the full protection and promotion of rights of landmine victims.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines believes this goal can be reached in our lifetime, with sufficient commitment and provision of resources. It is not often that states have the opportunity to achieve a victory over a humanitarian problem. We have come a long way, but if we are serious about finishing the job – we need strong, long-term political commitment and the resources needed.

The strength of the global ban on antipersonnel mines has demonstrated that the humanitarian impact of antipersonnel mines and the devastation they cause clearly outweigh any limited military utility they may have. Today, 157 nations have joined the Mine Ban Treaty, and nearly all of those still
outside the treaty comply nonetheless with the ban: they do not use, produce or transfer antipersonnel mines. We welcome Tuvalu’s accession last month. Every state that joins the treaty, whether it is affected by landmines or not, helps reinforce the international rejection of the weapon. In the coming months we hope to see Finland, Libya, Poland, South Sudan, and Tonga come on board. We were encouraged to hear updates from some of these states, including Finland, on their efforts to accede to the treaty, and are glad that the US landmine policy review initiated in 2009 is still ongoing.

Thanks to thorough implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty by the vast majority of States Parties, impressive progress has been made toward our goal of mine-free world:

- Casualty rates over the last few years have descended below the 5,000 per year mark; and States Parties are making progress in the coordination of assistance to survivors.
- Eighteen States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty have completed the clearance of all their mined areas;
- States Parties have collectively destroyed over 45 million stockpiled antipersonnel mines;
- Vast tracts of mine affected land are being cleared resulting in the destruction of hundreds of thousands of landmines every year;

Yet major challenges remain in the quest to eliminate antipersonnel mines and address the consequences of their use:

- A total of 39 states remain outside the Mine Ban Treaty of which all but a few stockpile a total of approximately 160 million antipersonnel mines;
- Four States Parties—Belarus, Greece, Turkey, and Ukraine—missed their stockpile destruction deadlines and are still in violation of the Mine Ban Treaty;
- Many states still don’t know the full extent of their landmine contamination, and many are not able to clear it quickly enough to meet their treaty-mandatory deadline;
- Landmine survivors still require better availability and accessibility of services, especially in rural and remote areas where the majority of survivors live.

Next month Cambodia is hosting the 11th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty in Phnom Penh. We urge all states to attend this important meeting and come prepared with updated information on their progress in fulfilling treaty obligations and meeting commitments made under the Cartagena Action Plan, adopted in 2009.

Cambodia is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world – one could not imagine a more meaningful place for a gathering of the international community to advance the work of the Mine Ban Treaty. For civil society, this conference also has additional significance, as Cambodia is in many ways the cradle of the mine ban movement.

Meanwhile, here in New York, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines is calling on all governments to support the annual resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty that will be voted on in the coming days. Even states that remain outside the convention should vote in favor of the resolution to clearly express their support for the humanitarian objectives of the treaty. In the past, about half of the states not party to the convention have voted in favor of the resolution, and we hope this year this number will grow even more.
To conclude, let me thank those states which have underlined here both the success of the Mine Ban Treaty to date and the need to continue our efforts until the job is finished. We look forward to working with every state in the future to end all use of landmines and to rebuild the lives and communities which have been affected by them.

Thank you.