

MODERNISING ROTTERDAM —

THE RIGHT TO KNOW MUST BE DEFENDED



HEALTHY AND SAFE WORK IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

The right to healthy and safe work is a fundamental human right and essential to decent work.

This month (June 2022) the ILO will guarantee this right by amending the ***Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*** to include key health and safety Conventions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work.

This ground-breaking achievement will further raise the importance of healthy and safe work and demand that Government's introduce policies that protect workers from exposure to hazards that harm their health, including from hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

The Rotterdam Convention is an important international information tool that ensures

countries have a right to know about the hazardous chemicals and pesticides that enter their country through the prior informed consent process. A listing on the Convention does not ban a substance but it is often a trigger for countries to introduce regulation at a national level to protect workers and citizens from hazardous substances.

THE PROBLEM

The Rotterdam Convention creates legally binding obligations for the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure for substances listed in its Annex III.

Highly hazardous chemicals that meet all conditions of listing in Annex III are being continually blocked for no legitimate reason, by individual Parties in some cases, at great cost to the safety, health and lives of workers and consumers particularly in the Global South, where these chemicals are largely traded.

Five very dangerous substances are currently being blocked: chrysotile asbestos, acetochlor, carbosulfan, fenthion formulation, and paraquat formulation.

The longest blocked chemical is chrysotile asbestos. Asbestos, which has been long banned in many Global North countries, is responsible for the deaths of more than 200,000 workers every year and recognised as causing half of all occupational lung cancers. Chrysotile asbestos has been recommended for listing by

the Convention's own scientific committee since 2006. Yet there have been 6 failed attempts over 14 years to list chrysotile asbestos.

In recent years some producers of these blocked chemicals have weaponised the Convention by pointing to the non-listing of certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides as evidence of their safe use and to dissuade governments from introducing policies to limit their use or require stronger controls or bans. These actions are directly undermining the Convention and threatening its future.

THE WAY FORWARD

Unions, NGOs and concerned activists have been urging governments to act to bypass these blocking tactics and modernise the Convention. We need governments to intervene to reform the Convention to ensure that it can meet these future challenges.

OPEN LETTER

TO: ALL DELEGATES TO ROTTERDAM CONVENTION COP 10

We demand the right to know if toxic substances are entering our countries

The 'Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade' has the objective to promote information sharing, shared responsibility and cooperation in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals to protect human health and the environment from harm and to contribute to the environmentally sound use of those chemicals.

The Rotterdam Convention is an important Convention. However, in the 18 years since the Convention came into force it has not been able to meet its full potential. It is now at a critical juncture.

Hazardous chemicals that meet all conditions to be listed under the Convention are being continually blocked, despite the Convention's own scientific committee, the Chemical Review Committee (CRC), determining that they are meeting all requirements for listing onto Annex III.

At the previous COPs a very small number of Parties blocked the listing of certain substances and hindered the vast majority of countries basic right to know about what hazardous chemicals are entering their country. This is a problem, especially for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, which have a limited chemicals management system. It means officials, employers, workers and consumers in receiving countries do not know of these hazardous materials entering their country and are therefore not protected.

The longest blocked chemical is chrysotile asbestos. Asbestos, long banned in most Global North countries is responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 workers every year and recognised as the cause of more than half of all occupational cancers. Other hazardous chemicals whose listing are currently being blocked from inclusion on Annex III of the Convention are: acetochlor, carbosulfan, fenthion formulation, and paraquat formulation.

Shockingly, some producers of these blocked hazardous substances are using the non-listing to falsely claim their products are safe, present no risks to health and the environment and try to make it look like they are supported by a majority of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention. These actions are directly undermining the goal and effectiveness of the Convention and its credibility and thus need immediate response.

WE CALL ON ALL PARTIES TO THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION COP 10 FACE-TO-FACE MEETING IN JUNE 2022 IN GENEVA SWITZERLAND TO:

1

LIST ONTO ANNEX III OF THE CONVENTION, ALL CRC RECOMMENDED HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AND SUBSTANCES BLOCKED UNTIL NOW;

2

REDOUBLE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS IMPORTANT CONVENTION

3

IMPLEMENT THE RIGHT TO KNOW FOR ALL PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION AND RESPECT THE SCIENTIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CRC



STOP ASBESTOS EPIDEMIC

255,000 PEOPLE DIE FROM
ASBESTOS-RELATED
DISEASES GLOBALLY
EACH YEAR.

