



Press Release

Immediate Use

URGENT CALLS FOR UN ACTION ON ASBESTOS

LONDON, MAY 8, 2019: Protesters from around the country demonstrated outside the Russian Embassy in Kensington today calling for Russia to end its veto of United Nations action on asbestos. With banners in English and Russian, wearing martindale face masks and personal protective clothing and carrying posters with the images of the asbestos injured, the demands of UK asbestos victims, trade unionists and health and safety campaigners were given voice: **stop exposing vulnerable populations to deadly asbestos.**

“It is appalling,” said Graham Dring, Chair of the Forum of Asbestos Victims Support Groups “that a few countries which profit from the asbestos industry can hold the UN’s Rotterdam Convention to ransom. The Forum has supported an Open Letter to all the delegates at the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP9) to the Rotterdam Convention now meeting in Geneva to find a way to bypass the veto orchestrated by Russia.”¹ Copies of the Open Letter in English and Russian were delivered to the Embassy of the Russian Federation Residence for the attention of Ambassador Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko.

What is at stake is not only the lives of human beings but the future of the Rotterdam Convention, a multilateral treaty designed “to promote shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals.” For the 7th time, the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos on Annex III of the Convention has been recommended by the Convention’s Chemical Review Committee; in the run-up to COP9, Russian vested interests made their intention to block listing very clear.²

Commenting on the Convention’s impasse, the Co-ordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat Laurie Kazan-Allen said:

“The asbestos refuseniks do not want to provide importing countries with information about the health hazards posed by using chrysotile; to do so would deter potential customers and adversely impact on industry’s profits. UN delegates must oppose and expose the rapacious behaviour of profit-driven capitalists and stand up for the human rights of all populations who deserve to live a life free of toxic exposures.”

¹ Open Letter (English). *An Appeal to the 161 Parties at COP 9 of the Rotterdam Convention* ‘No more delays, no more vetoes.’ April 20, 2019.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/open-letter-appeal-to-the-161-parties-at-cop-9-of-the-rotterdam-convention.pdf>

Открытое Письмо. Обращение к 161-му Государству-Стороне Роттердамской Конвенции 1, участвующим в КС-9 ‘Нет дальнейшему откладыванию, нет использованию вето’ 20 апреля 2019 г.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/open-letter-appeal-to-the-161-parties-at-cop-9-of-the-rotterdam-convention-russ.pdf>

² Workers of the Chrysotile Industry Celebrate Chrysotile Asbestos Protection Day. April 29, 2019.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/workers-of-the-chrysotile-industry-celebrate-chrysotile-asbestos-protection-day-300839894.html>

Notes to Editors

1. For more information contact: Graham Dring, Chair of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK by email at: asbestos.mmcr@gmail.com or mobile: 0788 787 1501 or Steve Ballard by email at: secretary@lhc.org.uk or mobile: 07989 786 399.
2. Chrysotile (white) has always been the most popular type of asbestos used and accounts nowadays for nearly all the asbestos mined and used around the world. Currently, global asbestos consumption is ~1.5 million tonnes(t) / year with Russian and Kazakh output accounting for (645,000t; 43%) and (192,500t; 13%), respectively of all the asbestos fiber mined in 2016, the latest year for which data are available.
3. The demonstration took place on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 in front of the Russian Embassy at 6-7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W84QP.
4. For information on the Rotterdam Convention see the Convention's website: <http://www.pic.int> Also see: The Rotterdam Convention 2013: <http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-rotterdam-convention-2013-primer-apr-18.php>
5. A 6-page Chrysotile Asbestos Fact Sheet produced in April 2019 can be accessed at: https://www.asbestossafety.gov.au/sites/asea/files/documents/2019-04/CHRYBOTILE%20KEY%20FACTS_180419%20final_0.pdf
6. For more information on the groups which issued this press release see the following websites:

The Forum: <http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk>
The International Ban Asbestos Secretariat: <http://ibasecretariat.org>
The Joint Union Asbestos Committee: <http://the-juac.co.uk/about-juac/>
London Hazards Centre: <https://www.lhc.org.uk/>
7. Photos taken at the demonstration are attached below.



