



Press release

June 19, 2017

Historic Mission: Unity of Asbestos Victims

In July, 2017 members of a Japanese delegation will make history when they journey to the UK's asbestos heartland to join up with others who have lost loved ones to the deadly diseases caused by asbestos exposures. Lung cancer sufferer Keiji Kubo from Yamaguchi Prefecture joins Tadao Hirato from Hyogo, Keiichi Matsushima from Saitama, Masao Watanabe from Yamanashi, Mrs. Kahoru Udagawa from Aichi, Mrs. Miyuki Nomura from Toyama, Mrs. Mitsuyo Abe from Osaka and thirteen others on a mission to show solidarity with those in the UK whose lives have been impacted by deadly exposures at work or at home.

Underlining the importance of this mission, Sugio Furuya, advisor to the Japan Association of Mesothelioma, Asbestos-related Disease Victims and Their Families, said:

“As a result of the widespread and uncontrolled use of asbestos, citizens in the UK and Japan have endured extreme suffering with so much ill health, so many premature deaths and so much environmental contamination. The members of our delegation are eager to show solidarity with UK victims and to share experiences in order to progress the campaigns for asbestos justice at home and abroad.”

The activities which the delegation will participate in include a study day in Manchester on July 5 which will be addressed by UK, Australian, Spanish, Belgian and French representatives of victims' organizations and Action Mesothelioma Day events on July 7 in Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool and Derby.

Commenting on the upcoming events, Graham Dring, from the Asbestos Victims' Support Groups Forum UK, said:

“All the members of the Forum welcome the visit of our Japanese comrades. We are delighted they will be able to take part in activities in five different cities and know that their presence will underline the ties that bind asbestos victims the world over. For decades, global asbestos interests have exploited workers and the public; now, the time has come for all of those affected to make a stand together. The participation of so many Japanese victims marks a turning point in the global campaign for asbestos justice.”

Notes to Editors

1. During the 20th century, the UK and Japan imported 7 and 10 million tonnes of asbestos respectively. Both countries are in the midst of occupational asbestos epidemics with the annual loss of life from asbestos-related diseases estimated at 5,000 in both the UK and Japan.¹ In 1999, the UK banned the use of all types of asbestos; in 2004, the Japanese Government announced the introduction of a phased asbestos ban with all new use of asbestos finally banned in 2012.²
2. To contact the organizers of this historic mission, email Graham Dring at: asbestos.mcr@gmail.com or Sugio Furuya at: 2009aban@gmail.com
3. For more information on the groups which have issued this press release see the websites of:
 - Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK
<http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk>
 - The Japan Association of Mesothelioma, Asbestos-related Disease Victims and Their Families
<http://www.chuuhishu-family.net/w/> (Japanese only)
 - International Ban Asbestos Secretariat
<http://ibasecretariat.org>

¹ For background information on fightback against the UK's deadly asbestos legacy, see the website of the British Asbestos Newsletter: <http://www.britishasbestosnewsletter.org/>

² In fact, the asbestos ban in Japan is amongst be the most stringent in the world – military use of asbestos is prohibited – as it applies to material containing both intentionally and non-intentionally added asbestos of 0.1% or more by weight.