



Press Release

June 29, 2011

EU Call for Sanctions on Canada

Brussels, Belgium: Calls will be made on June 30, 2011 that the European Union (EU) take sanctions against Canada for derailing a United Nations protocol to protect vulnerable populations from the hazards of asbestos.

Last week, the Canadian delegation to the Rotterdam Convention meeting in Geneva single-handedly derailed a long-standing attempt to include chrysotile asbestos on the Convention's prior informed consent list despite support for this listing from 142 out of 143 Parties to the Convention (listing can only be proceed if there is 100% unanimity).

The duplicitous and underhanded behaviour of the Canadian representatives attracted widespread condemnation from delegates in Geneva as well as international campaigners, eminent scientific and medical professionals and ordinary Canadians. IBAS Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen, a member of the Rotterdam Convention Alliance, maintained a minute by minute watch on developments from her London base. In her presentation to the European Parliament's seminar: "*Asbestos – Still a Killer*,"¹ she will detail the latest moves by global asbestos thugs to deny developing countries the right to know the hazards of the asbestos they are importing.

Commenting on recent developments, Ms. Kazan-Allen said:

"I have been studying the global asbestos industry for over 20 years. In that time, I have witnessed political dishonesty, industrial thuggery, corporate malfeasance, judicial manipulation, the misuse of science, the abuse of the legal process, physical and professional intimidation. What we saw last week in Geneva, transcended this – it was pure evil. Canada is now a rogue state and should be dealt with in the same way as other administrations which have breached the acceptable level of behaviour expected of civilized societies.

¹ This seminar is being organized by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament in collaboration with trade unions and non-governmental organizations. It takes place on 30 June 2011 from 14.30 to 17.30, Room ASP A3G-2 European Parliament. For more information on this event, please contact Sonia at: sonia.chapotel@europarl.europa.eu or Anne at acocquyt@efbh.be

Canadian Government documents I am bringing to Brussels will prove to MEPs that Ottawa had received recommendations from its own advisors to list chrysotile under the Rotterdam Convention. That they chose not to do so with the full knowledge of the tragic consequences is a sin of unpardonable proportions.”

Notes to editors

1. The International Ban Asbestos Secretariat has been campaigning since 1999 to achieve justice for all asbestos victims and a global ban on asbestos. Publications, articles and recommended links can be accessed on the IBAS website: www.ibasecretariat.org Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen can be reached by email at: lka@btinternet.com or by phone at: +44 (0) 776 66 45 880.

Rolf Gehring, Secretary for Health & Safety of the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), co-organisers of this event, can be reached at: +32 478 84 0660. EFBWW is running the campaign: “Europe 2023 – Asbestos Free” – see also: <http://www.efbww.org>

2. The Rotterdam Convention is a multilateral United Nations protocol under which vulnerable populations are provided a modicum of protection from dangerous substances. When a consensus has been achieved regarding the hazardous nature of a designated chemical or pesticide, that substance is included on the prior informed consent list of the Convention. This listing is not a ban; it is however a requirement that exporting nations provide documentation on the nature of the substance so that importers can make informed decisions as to whether or not they are capable of using it safely.
3. Information on last week’s developments in Geneva can be accessed on the IBAS website: www.ibasecretariat.org or at the website of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin: <http://www.iisd.ca/chemical/pic/cop5/>

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