The Solidarity Delegation from Asia to Quebec :
No to financing the Jeffrey asbestos mine

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Ahmedabad, State of Gujarat, India. 2009

Bekasi district, West Java province, Indonesia. 2010

Asia calls on Québec: Stop the New Asbestos Mine

A statement by the delegation from Asia to Québec

We are here today representing asbestos victims, trade unions and health organizations in Asia. We are horrified by the plans of the Government of Québec to provide a $58 million loan guarantee to develop new asbestos mine. It has been predicted that if this project goes ahead, the new Jeffrey mine will produce over 5 million tonnes of asbestos in the next quarter century.

This asbestos won't be used in Québec or anywhere in Canada – Canadian citizens do not want to risk hazardous exposures to asbestos and they are right not to do so. No human being should be subjected to such dangers. The likely destination for these asbestos shipments is Asian countries, a fact which we view as morally indefensible as well as racist. Is the life of a worker in Mumbai worth less than that of a worker in Québec?

Around the world, asbestos is killing one person every 5 minutes.[1] The International Labor Organization estimates that there are more than 100,000 asbestos-related deaths every year. The World Health Organization believes the death toll is higher and that future fatalities will escalate due to ongoing hazardous exposures. Epidemics of asbestos-related diseases have been documented in countries such as the UK, France, Australia, Italy and the U.S. Similar epidemics are emerging in Japan and Korea; in both countries, the scandal caused by the asbestos deaths of workers and residents who lived near asbestos mines or asbestos-consuming factories has been widely reported.

In most asbestos-consuming countries in Asia, the epidemic of asbestos-related diseases remains largely invisible. Asbestosis and cancer victims are dying without proper diagnoses and treatment (their illnesses are often misdiagnosed); in most Asian countries, the injured are unable to obtain financial support or compensation. We know that many asbestos victims in this region worked with asbestos from Québec. In fact, Asian countries remain the most important customers for Québec asbestos exporters. We are in no doubt that the owners of the new Jeffrey asbestos mine intend to ship the

[1] See Asbestos Policies of International Agencies and Organizations, page 9-11.

majority of annual production to Asian destinations: more money for the anonymous international investors, more pollution and environmental exposure for Québec citizens and more asbestos deaths for Asia.

How many dead Asians are enough for the Québec Government to accept that this indefensible trade has to end? Every human being has the right to work and live in a healthy environment. Are the tragic repercussions of asbestos exposures in Asia and elsewhere of less significance than a few hundred jobs in Québec?

Asbestos industry propagandists assure people in Québec that asbestos can be used safely under controlled conditions. Yet, research in Québec has proved conclusively that such conditions do not exist in Québec workplaces[2] They most certainly do not exist in India, Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines. For many years Québec's asbestos lobby has, by means of aggression and deception, prevented the truth about asbestos from being told. This taboo has been broken by Québec's own medical doctors and health professionals, who have challenged the Québec Government to stop the mining and export of asbestos. We thank them for their integrity and courage.

At this critical moment when the asbestos industry wants to launch another generation of asbestos disease, we have come in person to make a direct, human appeal to the citizens of Québec. We are confident that once they are aware of the tragic asbestos reality which exists in Asia, they will put pressure on their Government to STOP THE MINE.

On behalf of the delegation from Asia to Québec
Coordinator of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN)
Sugio FURUYA (Mr.)

[2] ***Project provincial amiante*** http://www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca/Publication/pdftravail/projetamiante.pdf

Introducing the Members of the Delegation from Asia

Japan

Sugio Furuya is the Secretary General of the Japan Occupational Safety and Health Resource Center, a founding member of the Ban Asbestos Network of Japan (BANJAN). He has been active in the Japanese campaign to ban asbestos and obtain justice for asbestos victims for over 20 years.

Kazumi Yoshizaki The appalling and unnecessary asbestos death of her beloved father, spurred Ms Yoshizaki to campaign for a worldwide ban on asbestos. She is an active member of the Japan Association of Mesothelioma and Asbestos-related Disease Victims and their Families.

India

Anup Srivasta is the Education Officer for South Asia for the global trade union federation: Building and Woodworkers International. He has worked, in particular, to inform construction workers about the risks of building products that contain asbestos since in many countries, including Canada, construction workers have high levels of asbestos-related disease.

Omana George is a Program Coordinator at the Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), a well-known civil society organization that has been promoting workers' rights in Asia for over 30 years. She has been involved in campaigns to achieve a ban on asbestos in India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Indonesia

Muchamad Darisman is a community activist from the Local Initiative for Occupational Health & Safety Network (LION) in Bandung, Indonesia. He has been part of a joint Indonesian-Japanese-Korean task force investigating hazardous asbestos exposures to workers and members of the public in Indonesia for 3 years. During this time, he has interviewed scores of at-risk individuals, photographed multiple examples of asbestos contamination and participated in scientific research.

Korea

Ye-yong Choi is the Executive Director of the Ban Asbestos Network Korea (BANKO), and a Director of the Asian Citizen's Center for Environment and Health, a member group of Friends of the Earth Korea. He has been researching asbestos issues in terms of 'international transfers of asbestos industry' in Asia and Europe for some years.

Jeong-rim LEE was diagnosed with malignant pleural and peritoneal mesothelioma in 2006. She has no asbestos-related work history but had the misfortune to live near Korea's 2nd largest factory producing asbestos-cement material. She is the mother of two children and a member of the Korean Asbestos Victims' Network.

Statement by Sugio Furuya

Thank you for coming. I am sure you have many questions as to why we have come such a distance in order to talk directly to you.

This has never happened before: that the people from the countries where Québec's asbestos is sent have asked to be heard by the people of Québec.

We are here because we are gravely concerned about the possibility of a new asbestos mine being built in Québec. The consortium of international investors has asked the Québec government to give a $58 million loan guarantee in order to open this mine. If this project goes ahead, the new Jeffrey mine will produce over 5 million tonnes of asbestos over the next quarter century.

This asbestos won't be used in Québec or anywhere in Canada – Canadian citizens do not want to risk hazardous exposures to asbestos and they are right not to do so. No human being should be subjected to such dangers. The likely destination for these asbestos shipments is Asian countries, a fact which we view as morally indefensible as well as racist. Is the life of a worker in Mumbai worth less than that of a worker in Québec?

At this critical moment when the asbestos industry is poised to launch a new generation of asbestos disease, we have come here to appeal directly to the people of Quebec. We are confident that once they are aware of the tragic asbestos reality which exists in Asian countries, they will put pressure on their Government to **STOP THE MINE.**

Our delegation includes a trade unionist from India, a Korean victim of asbestos, a bereaved Japanese family member, and representatives of Asian groups concerned with occupational health, public safety and environmental contamination.

In order to save time, I will not introduce each member of the delegation to you; please refer to the relevant section in the press dossier for details about each person.

I now invite my colleagues to speak. The floor will then be thrown open for questions.

Statement by Kazumi Yoshizaki

My name is Kazumi Yoshizaki. I am a member of Japan's asbestos victims group. I lost my father to pleural mesothelioma in 2005. He worked for a transportation company, and was exposed to asbestos between 1969 and 1971 when he was in charge of transportation of asbestos imported. He died at the age of 67.

When I heard about Jeffery Mine, I felt really surprised, because I thought Canada was an environment conscious country. My simple question is why the Quebec government encourages asbestos industry to mine and export deadly asbestos to Asian countries although asbestos is hazardous to health and it is a carcinogen. I do not think it is feasible that asbestos can be used safely anywhere in the world. It is obvious that the only way to prevent asbestos-related diseases is to avoid asbestos exposure. Once asbestos fibers are inhaled, they remain in people's bodies forever. That is why people must stop using asbestos globally as soon as possible.

I know how horrible asbestos is. Asbestos fibers sneaked into my father's lungs silently, stayed there for many years and suddenly rampaged. Asbestos caused him physical and mental pain. It took happiness, future, dream, hope, and stable mental state from him. It took everything from him. In the end, it took his life. While he was suffering from mesothelioma, I always felt terribly depressed. It is the most painful experience I have ever had. I am still in deep grief.

Everyone knows that nothing is more precious than human life. Please don't mine asbestos! Please don't spread asbestos fibers in the air! No more asbestos victims! It is time people worked on a global ban on asbestos.

Statement by Anup Srivastava

I am here today representing the Building and Woodworkers International, as well as Indian trade unions. I bring you greetings from the world trade union movement.

The International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 175 million workers in 151 countries, is campaigning for a global ban on asbestos. Asbestos kills at least 300 people every day. Many are construction workers who are exposed to asbestos fibres when they repair or demolish buildings.

The asbestos industry and Premier Charest claim that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used. No reputable medical organization in Quebec, Canada or the world supports this view.

Numerous Quebec medical and health organizations have challenged Premier Charest to stop denying the clear science that chrysotile asbestos causes cancers, mesothelioma and asbestosis. They have challenged Premier Charest to end his morally and medically indefensible policy exporting asbestos to our countries.

We express our respect and gratitude to them for speaking the truth – in this case a very inconvenient truth – which contradicts the message from powerful vested interests.

Trade unions in India have directly appealed to Québec to end its export of asbestos. When Premier Charest was in India earlier this year, he refused our request for a meeting.

At this urgent moment, we decided to come to Quebec to again ask Premier Charest to listen to us and also to make a direct, personal appeal to you – our brothers and sisters in Québec. Please help us. We need your solidarity and support. Please tell your government not to finance the export of asbestos disease to the developing world.

Please use the $58 million to create alternative economic initiatives and to assist the remaining 250 Jeffrey asbestos miners.

We ask you to stand beside us in this struggle and tell your Government that it is not right for a worker on a construction site in Mumbai or in a brake lining factory in Jakarta to receive hazardous exposures to asbestos. Such exposures are illegal in Québec. Indeed millions of dollars are being spent to decontaminate asbestos-riddled buildings, schools and hospitals in Québec. We are happy to know that people in Québec are being protected from asbestos harm.

Do we not have the same right to live and work in a healthy environment? How can your Government justify sending asbestos to India, when it is paying millions of dollars to remove it from buildings in Québec? Do our lives count for less than yours? Do our children's lives mean nothing to Premier Charest and his Government?

Please hear our appeal. You are our last hope. We know that the people of Québec are capable of great compassion and generosity. Your struggles have been many and yet you succeeded in preserving your proud culture, vibrant language and valued traditions. We ask you to stand together with us in our struggle to protect human life in India and throughout Asia. **Please STOP THE MINE.**

Our venerated leader Mahatma Gandhi listed commerce without morality, science without humanity and politics without principle among the deadly sins. There is no doubt that these sins and others have been committed by people intent on selling deadly asbestos to Indian consumers. We urge the people of Québec, as mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, consumers, citizens and voters, to speak out on this issue. Enough life has been sacrificed in the pursuit of the asbestos dollar. Let it end here.

Please STOP THE MINE.

Statement by Omana George

We are representing millions of people who do not have political or economic power; people who are being exposed to harm every time asbestos-cement roofing is cut with a saw or is broken in a storm; every time a child is playing amongst broken pieces of asbestos-cement; every time a family uses a broken piece of asbestos-cement roofing for their home.

These people have NO protection of any kind. They may not have even heard the word asbestos. But that doesn't stop asbestos from killing them.

The government of Québec, the Chrysotile Institute and Mr Chadha see asbestos as a profitable investment. They never speak about 99% of the life of asbestos. They never speak of the harm to health once the asbestos-containing products leave the factory and are out in the world. Please note that chrysotile asbestos represents 95% of all the asbestos ever sold and 100% of the asbestos market today.

95% of asbestos Québec exports is used for asbestos-cement construction products, such as roofing or pipes. The asbestos industry itself admits that drilling or sawing chrysotile asbestos-cement products is dangerous to health.

They do not say, however, how they prevent this from happening. They simply choose not to talk about it.

The World Health Organization (WHO), on the other hand, does talk about it. It expresses particular concern about use of asbestos-cement in the construction industry "because the workforce is large, it is difficult to control exposure, and in-place materials have the potential to deteriorate and pose a risk to those carrying out alterations, maintenance and demolition."[3]

The WHO is concerned. Why isn't Premier Charest concerned? Why isn't Mr Chadha concerned? Do they simply not care?

Another piece of nonsensical propaganda: Premier Charest, the asbestos industry and Mr Chadha claim that chrystotile asbestos is not a danger because it is bonded with cement and so no fibres can be released into the air.

I understand you here, in a first-world city, have experienced problems at the Montreal Olympic stadium with deteriorating cement. As the WHO says, "In many cases cement matrix containing asbestos does not remain intact during its useful life."

[3] http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2006/WHO_SDE_OEH_06.03_eng.pdf

Asbestos-cement materials certainly do not stay intact when an earthquake, a tsunami, or a hurricane occurs in our countries.

We are very disappointed that Premier Charest will not meet with us. We will be meeting instead with Minister of Economic Development, Clément Gignac.

We note that Minister Gignac is an enthusiastic supporter of the asbestos industry and has expressed his hope that his government will give the anonymous consortium of foreign investors the $58 million financing it wants.

We note that Minister Gignac rejected the request of the Canadian Cancer Society to not fund the Jeffrey mine. The Canadian Cancer Society, Just like the Quebec Medical Association and all of Québec's health experts said that financing the mine will spread an epidemic of asbestos disease in the developing world.

Mr Gignac did not listen. Will he listen to us?

What is blatantly obvious is that the Québec minister of health, Yves Bolduc, is not speaking up for public health. How can a Minister of Health reject the advice of all of Québec's medical and public health authorities and have any credibility? Instead of defending health, Minister Bolduc is defending the interests of the asbestos industry.

In our opinion, this is a dishonourable betrayal of his duties.

The government has asked local mayors and politicians in the Asbestos area, who are, of course, strong supporters of the asbestos industry, to provide a medical opinion on whether Quebec's asbestos can be safely used in our countries. What medical expertise do they have? What do they know of our countries? What do they know about the lives of workers in India?

We are sure that these mayors and local politicians are fine people. But it is absurd and offensive that they, behind closed doors are making decisions about our lives, when they have zero expertise and zero knowledge about our lives. Are we not allowed to speak for ourselves? Is this the new colonialism where people in our country are harmed but are not heard? We consider this to be disrespectful and racist.

If Premier Charest is genuinely concerned about how Québec asbestos is being used overseas, then he is morally obliged to listen to Québec's medical experts and ourselves, not to a closed-door political asbestos love-fest.

We are here to appeal to Premier Charest: Do the right thing, even if it is politically difficult. That is the test of a leader. Do not bring dishonour on Quebec. Do not finance the Jeffrey mine.

Statement by Machamad Darisman

We, as public health activists, are making progress in Asia and around the world to stop the use of asbestos. That is the good news. But the bad news is that our efforts are being hindered on every front by the Québec government and the Québec asbestos industry.

In order to protect the profits of the asbestos industry, they have interfered in country after country.

- They put pressure on the governments of Thailand and Korea not to require warning labels on sacks of asbestos;
- They lobbied the Japanese government not to ban asbestos;
- They continually organize asbestos propaganda seminars in my country and around the world with industry-funded speakers. They refuse to allow any independent, reputable scientist to speak;
- They threatened the government of South Africa with trade sanctions if it banned asbestos;
- On behalf of the Québec asbestos industry, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien phoned the President of Chile in 2001 to pressure him to withdraw legislation to ban asbestos.
- In Mexico and Brazil, they have funded lobbyists to defeat efforts to ban asbestos

This interference by Québec to impede public health progess in our countries is indefensible.

Québec is, in fact, a leading propagandist for asbestos in the developing world. This is shameful conduct.

Industrialized countries, such as Quebec, the United States, Europe, and Australia, have all banned asbestos – either through a legal ban or a virtual ban – in order to protect your citizens from harm. Please note that when we talk about asbestos today, we are talking about chrysotile asbestos, which represents 100% of the global asbestos trade and 95% of all asbestos ever sold.

Because industrialized countries refuse to use asbestos, the Jeffrey mine, if it goes ahead, will ship **ALL** its asbestos to Asia[4]. None of it will be used in Quebec.

Much of this asbestos will come to my country, Indonesia, where hazardous asbestos exposures endanger the lives of workers as well as members of the public. A few

[4] Industrial Minerals, December 1, 2010

months ago, I visited a town in West Java where a major asbestos processing factory is situated. Near the factory, I found a dump site littered with asbestos-cement debris and discarded asbestos sacks. These sacks came from Quebec. Today, I am returning one of these sacks. I had hoped to personally return it to the Mayor of Asbestos – but he has refused to meet our delegation.

To help asbestos sale in the developing world, the Québec government asked the Canadian government to sabotage the UN Rotterdam Convention. The Canadian government obliged. It sabotaged the Convention , by refusing to allow the recommendation of the Convention's expert scientific body to be implemented. The recommendation, made repeatedly by the expert scientists, is to put chrysotile asbestos on the Convention's list of hazardous substances. This would mean that importing countries would at least have to be told that chrysotile asbestos is hazardous. This is a minimal safety measure that is good for protecting health but not for protecting profits. Canada, shamefully, chose to protect asbestos profits, not human health.

Prime Minister Harper has promised the Québec asbestos industry that he will again sabotage the Rotterdam Convention at its meeting in June 2011.

Canada is increasingly seen around the world as a major obstacle to progress on environmental issues. Québec is increasingly seen as a major world obstacle to progress on public health efforts to protect people from asbestos.

We are here today to say to the people of Québec directly and personally: please support our efforts to stop the use of asbestos in our countries, just as you have stopped using asbestos in Québec.

Please do not allow your taxes as citizens to finance the Jeffrey mine.

Statement by Jeong-Rim Lee

I am Jeong-Rim Lee and I am from Korea. I have asbestos cancer.

The first symptoms of my disease appeared on 20th APR, 2005. One year later I was diagnosed with pleural and peritoneal mesothelioma, a fatal cancer caused by asbestos. Before I was diagnosed with malignant Mesothelioma I suffered excruciating pain. The only medication I received was for this pain – it did not work.

After my condition was diagnosed, I began chemotherapy. By August 30, 2010, I had been treated with chemotherapy 32 times. At the moment, I am not receiving those treatments. My body is being given time off from these harsh infusions which make me very tired, nauseous and depressed.

Asbestos has destroyed my life.

When I first got sick, I did not know about asbestos. I had a vague idea that it was something used for rooves but that was all I knew.

In the last 5 years, I have learned a lot about asbestos. Most of all, I have learned how it can completely destroy a life and the life of those who love someone with an asbestos disease.

I have suffered not only physically but mentally. I am an ordinary 44 year old woman, with a husband, two children and a job. For years I trained to become a banker. I loved my job and worked very hard to be good at it. This is all gone now.

I have been hospitalized for long periods on three occasions. While I was in hospital, my husband was at his school, my poor babies were in our house (not our home as how can you have a home without a Mother))! They are just 9 and 13 years old. They did not understand why their Mother could not cook their food, or take them to school or kiss them good night. One day I was there and the next day I was gone. How can small children understand? If I could not understand what was happening to me, how could they?!!

It is not a surprise to learn that I became very depressed. I became suicidal as a result of my anxiety over my illness and my separation from my family. I had 9 more months of medical treatment for this condition and still I was apart from those I loved.

This time was traumatic for all of us. My young children were confused and sad and also depressed too. So, was my husband. Unfortunately, I still need to be treated for my depression. It has taken a lot of strength for me to make this trip to Canada but I think it important you hear from me what asbestos can do to innocent human beings.

How do I feel?

Without pills I can not sleep by myself.

I have terrible pain in my shoulders, back, muscles and ribs . Everyday there seems to be a new symptom or an old one gets worse.

From time to time, I ask where, did the Asbestos in my chest come from?? Twenty years ago**,** I lived near a huge factory that produced chrysotile asbestos-cement products. Maybe it was there I inhaled Asbestos fibers. Two other people who lived in the same Apartment building have already died from mesothelioma, the same disease I have.

Was this chrysotile asbestos produced in Korea or was it imported??? I don't know... no body knows.

What do I want – do I want compensation? Don't insult me. What good is money to me? What do I want? I want my life back!

I hope the people all over the world can breathe fresh air and work in safe conditions. It a basic human right to live and work in a safe environment – one which is not contaminated with deadly asbestos fibers.

I don't want there to be any more asbestos patients like me.

If you go ahead with the new Quebec asbestos mine, millions of more tonnes of asbestos will be sent to Asia. There will be many other people whose lives will be lost so that Asbestos investors can profit.

Please reconsider the plans for this mine....

My whole life has been destroyed by my disease, a disease which I got because of asbestos. My children will lose their mother, my husband will lose his wife.

Please stop the export of Asbestos from Canada.

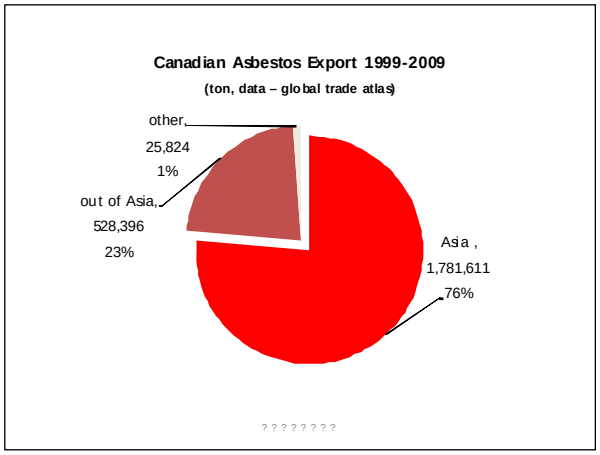
Thank you.

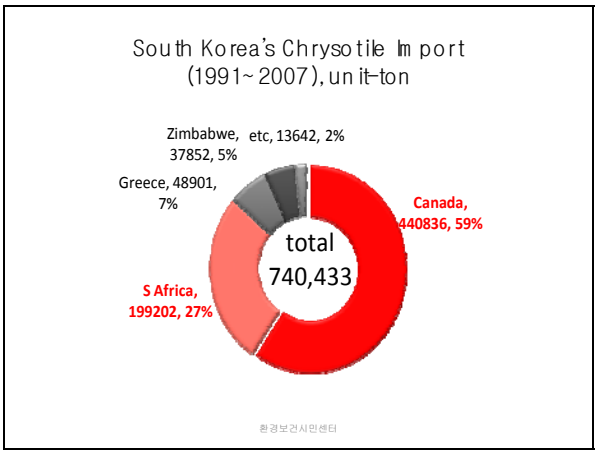
Statement by Yeyong Choi

Aren't our dead enough?

Premier Jean Charest makes speeches at international gatherings on climate change, clai ming that he wants to be a leader for sustainable economy and global development. To be a global leader, Mr Charest has to see the fact that Québec is the leading exporter of the deadly mineral 'chrysotile' asbestos to Asia, exporting over 1.77 million tons during recent 11 years (1999-2009), which is 76% of Québec's total asbestos export. The ratio o f export to Asia is getting higher every year. Québec chrysotile asbestos imported to Kor ea since 1991 is over 0.44 million tons, which is 59% of Korea's total chrysotile asbestos i mport.

I guess Mr Charest must not happy if I say 'Québec is the major Asian labor killer'. But it i s true. Not only workers but also many innocent residents. The forgotten words 'pollutio n export' and 'double standards' of 1970s and 1980s is now another name for Québec. If the new mine is allowed, then all the asbestos must be not used in Quebec or Canada, b ut will all be exported to Asia. Aren't our dead enough?





Yeyong CHOI
Director of Asian Citizen's Center for Environment and Health (based in Seoul, Korea)

National Asbestos Bans[5]

Argentina	Denmark	Ireland	Mongolia	Seychelles
Australia	Egypt	Israel	Mozambique	Slovakia
Austria	Estonia	Italy	Netherlands	Slovenia
Bahrain	Finland	Japan	New Caledonia	South Africa
Belgium	France	Jordan	Norway	Spain
Brunei	Gabon	Korea (South)	Oman	Sweden
Bulgaria	Germany	Kuwait	Poland	Switzerland
Chile	Greece	Latvia	Portugal	United Kingdom
Croatia	Honduras	Lithuania	Qatar	Uruguay
Cyprus	Hungary	Luxembourg	Romania	
Czech Republic	Iceland	Malta	Saudi Arabia	

Current Asbestos Bans in Asia

- **Singapore** 1989: Even though no raw asbestos is being imported to Singapore (under the Poisons Act 1989), the use of asbestos-containing gaskets, jointing sheet material and some other products remains legal.
- **Japan** 2004: (with few exceptions) Industrial Safety and Health Act
- **Korea** 2007: (with few exceptions) Industrial Safety and Health Act
- **Mongolia** 2010: Governmental Order No.192 - enforcement of this act remains problematic

National Ban Timetables in Asia

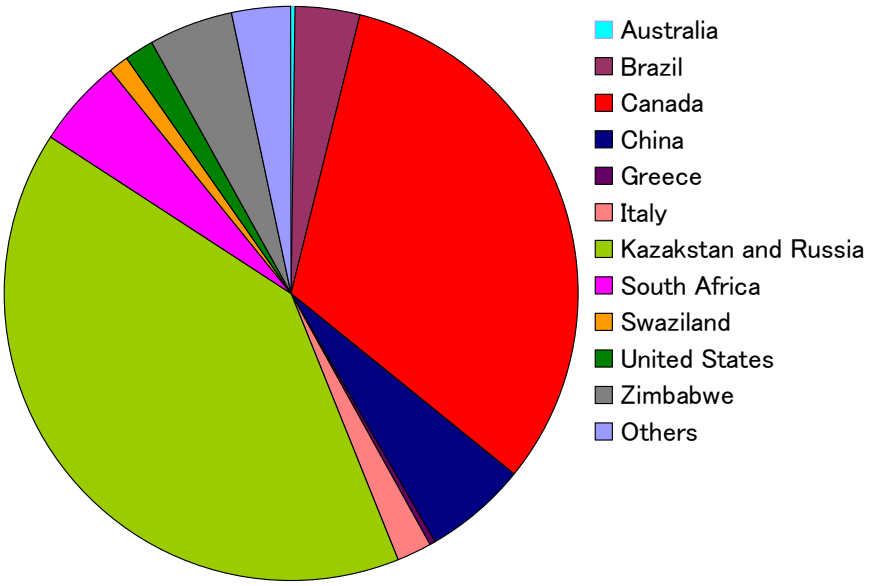
- **Taiwan** bans the use of asbestos in construction materials in 2008 under the Toxic Substances Management Act
- **Thailand**: ban expected by 2012 through a voluntary phase-out plan developed in 2007
- **Malaysia**: ban expected by 2015 through a voluntary phase-out plan developed in 2009
- **Philippines:** ban expected by 2018 as specified in a draft code of practice adopted in 2008
- **Vietnam:** ban is expected by 2020 as stated in the National Program for the Elimination of Asbestos-related Disease (NPEARD) developed in 2007
- **Taiwan:** comprehensive ban is expected by 2020 as announced by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2010

New Dialogues on Asbestos in Asia

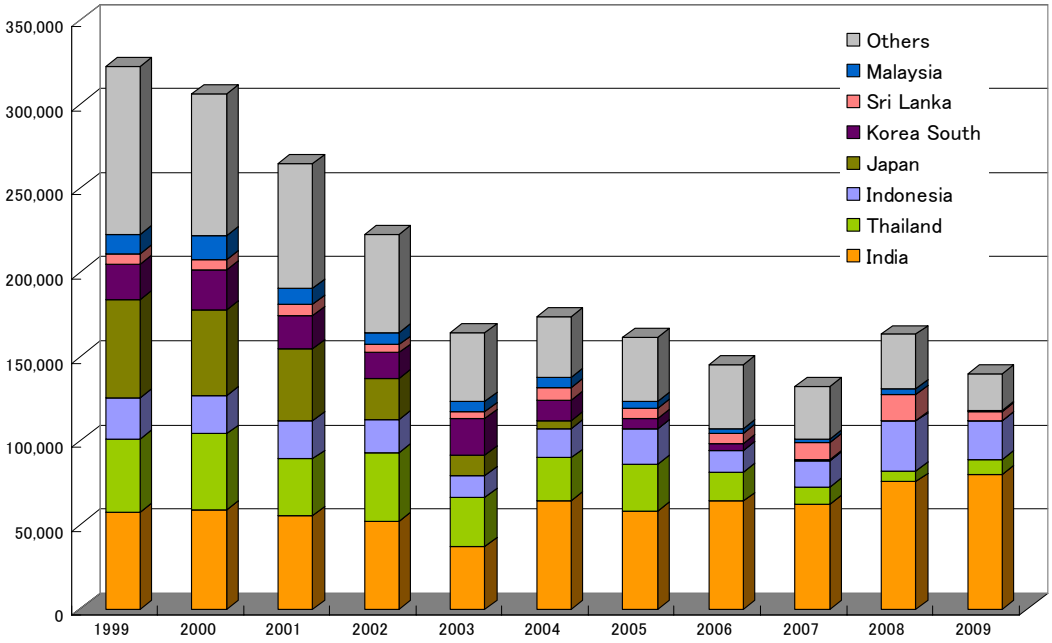
- **Cambodia**: consideration of the asbestos hazard began in 2009

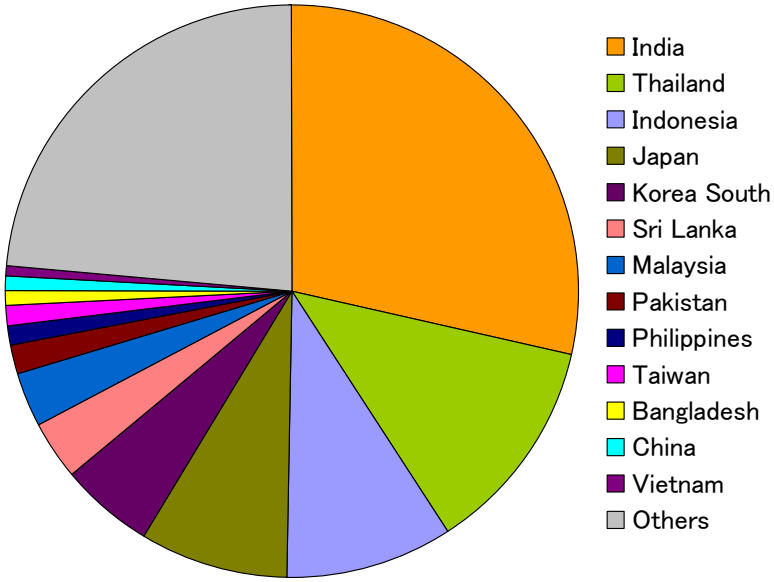
[5] Fro chronological information about the implementation of these bans, see: http://ibasecretariat.org/chron_ban_list.php

Global Asbestos Production 1900-2009[6]



Canadian Asbestos Exports 1999-2009



[6] The data used to construct the pie charts and bar graph was taken from Canada Export Statistics, Commodity: 2524, Asbestos as obtained by Canadian MP Pat Martin.

Canadian Asbestos Exports 1999-2009