

International Ban Asbestos Secretariat

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Open Letter to COP7 Delegates **List Chrysotile Asbestos, Save the Rotterdam Convention!**

May 12, 2015

From May 12 to May 15, 2015, delegates to the 7th Conference of the Parties (COP7) of the Rotterdam Convention (RC) will discuss whether or not to list chrysotile asbestos on Annex III of the Convention.

This is the fifth time the RC's Chemical Review Committee has recommended that chrysotile be included on Annex III. It has done so in the recognition that exposure to chrysotile asbestos can cause debilitating and deadly cancers and respiratory diseases.

Yesterday, the WHO released a film which graphically illustrated the devastation caused by asbestos use: *Chrysotile asbestos – Voices from South-East Asia*.¹ Asbestos diseases were, said Dr. Abjjeet Jadhav, like “dry-drowning. Your body needs air but your lungs are simply not able to breath it.”

The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labor Organization, the International Agency for Research on Cancer and other global bodies tasked with protecting human health agree that the best way to prevent asbestos-related diseases is to stop exposure to this acknowledged carcinogen. By listing chrysotile asbestos on Annex III, importing countries will be able to make informed decisions about whether they can protect their citizens from toxic exposures.

Commenting on the decision facing COP7 delegates, IBAS Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen said:

“The recommendation to include chrysotile asbestos on Annex III is a product of deliberations conducted under the Convention's rules and procedures. If, at COP7, vested interests once again succeed in blocking progress on chrysotile asbestos, they will not only endanger millions of people the world over but they will also do irreparable harm to the Rotterdam Convention. If the Convention is to fulfil its obligations, all Parties must support the listing of chrysotile.”

¹ *Chrysotile asbestos – Voices from South-East Asia*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTiF3xGXFTI>

Background Information

1. The Rotterdam Convention was established to progress environmental justice by imposing controls on the international trade in dangerous substances; exporting countries must advise importing countries of the toxic nature of designated substances so that importers might make informed decisions about whether or not they can use these substances without causing human poisoning or environmental damage.²
2. More information on the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat can be found at: <http://www.ibasecretariat.org>
3. A COP7 side event entitled “Chrysotile Asbestos – Who pays the Bill?” is being held on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at 13:15-14:45 in Room 3. This session is being organized by the Rotterdam Convention Alliance (ROCA), a coalition of NGOs and campaigning bodies.³ During this session, delegates will be addressed by experts from the WHO, Vietnam, Korea, Hong Kong and India. The new WHO film “Chrysotile Asbestos – Voices from South-East Asia” will be shown.
4. A paper released on April 30, 2015 estimated that 300 million people in the WHO European Region live in countries which have not banned asbestos. Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, said that: “We cannot afford losing almost 15,000 lives a year in Europe, especially workers, from diseases caused by exposure to asbestos. Every death from asbestos-related diseases is avoidable.”⁴

² Kazan-Allen L. *Rotterdam Convention 2013 – an Activist's Diary*. May 21, 2012. <http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-rotterdam-convention-an-activists-diary-may-2013.php>

³ Rotterdam Convention Alliance
<http://rocalliance.blogspot.co.uk/>

⁴ WHO Europe. *At least one in three Europeans can be exposed to asbestos at work and in the environment*. April 30, 2015 (Amended May 1, 2015).

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2015/at-least-one-in-three-europeans-can-be-exposed-to-asbestos-at-work-and-in-the-environment>