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May 16, 2018

Re: Open Letter to the Asbestos Industry - The End is Nigh!

To Whom it May Concern,

Recent developments and new data substantiate the conclusion that the end for the deadly asbestos industry is fast approaching.¹ Wholesale rejection of asbestos by international agencies, regional bodies, national governments and consumers has resulted in a dramatic fall in asbestos demand and a considerable diminution of this toxic industry's influence.² With impending asbestos bans in Canada, Brazil, the Ukraine and Moldova, it is clear that the dominance by vested interests of the global asbestos debate is long gone.

As of today, there are only two countries – Russia and Kazakhstan³ – exporting asbestos fiber. These countries are holding the rest of the world to ransom⁴ and, in doing so, could be responsible for millions of asbestos deaths.⁵ When the time comes to compensate the injured and remediate the environmental contamination, the polluters will be long gone. Asbestos victims, devastated communities and national governments will pay the price for the asbestos industry's profits.

In Brazil, formerly one of the world's biggest asbestos producers, an event is being held this week (May 15-18, 2018), which underscores the huge transformation in the public's perception of asbestos; once lauded as “the magic mineral,” asbestos is now widely regarded as “the killer dust.” In a somewhat delicious irony, the costs of the international São Paulo seminar entitled “Brazil without Asbestos (Brasil Sem Amianto)” are being paid for with fines recovered by Labor Prosecutors from companies found to have contravened state health and safety asbestos legislation.⁶

We wish our Brazilian colleagues the best of luck with this important event and pledge our support for the multitude of initiatives progressing national bans and providing support for the injured in India,⁷ Laos, Cambodia, Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal,⁸ Indonesia,⁹ the Cook Islands, Tonga,¹⁰ Vietnam, South Africa¹¹ and elsewhere.

As support for the global campaign to ban asbestos continues to grow via grassroots mobilization, regional authorities and international agencies are adopting new strategies to protect human health and the environment from toxic exposures. On April 10, 2018, the European Commission reiterated its stance on asbestos stating: “The Commission shares the view that exposure to asbestos is a matter of serious concern which should be adequately tackled both at EU and national level.”¹² Earlier this month (May, 2018) at the 32nd International Congress on Occupational Health, Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Secretary General of International Social Security Association – a body which in 2004 urged “all countries to ban the manufacture, trade and use of all types of asbestos and asbestos-containing products as soon as possible”¹³ – categorized the fact that we do not live in an asbestos-free world as “embarrassing.”¹⁴ The six-page “Dublin Statement on Occupational Health” issued at the end of that Congress was categorical about the urgent need for action. Recommendations made included: securing a covenant for implementing a global ban on asbestos, providing financial,

technical and educational support for countries seeking to achieve a ban, implementing prevention programs to minimize hazardous exposures and eliminate asbestos-related diseases and making public investment and development aid conditional on banning asbestos.¹⁵

The asbestos industry, an industry of death and destruction, is itself dying. As this toxic technology is consigned to the history books, a “just transition policy” for redundant asbestos miners and affected communities should be implemented as a matter of urgency. They too deserve the human right to work and live in a healthy environment; for them, and for us, the future is asbestos-free.

Signed by:

Individuals

Emeritus Professor Dr. Hans-Joachim Woitowitz, Medical Faculty of the Justus Liebig University of Giessen, Germany and Emeritus Member, Collegium Ramazzini, Italy

Dr. Jukka Takala, President of the International Commission of Occupational Health

Dr. Daniela Degiovanni, Oncologist and 2018 recipient of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, Italy

Dr. Jim teWaterNaude, Public Health Medicine Specialist, Cape Town, South Africa

Dr. Sophia Kisting, Executive Director, National Institute for Occupational Health, South Africa

Mick Antoniow AM, Member of the National Assembly for Wales

Francisco Báez Baquet, former Uralita employee, retired trade unionist, activist author, Seville, Spain

Organizations

Fiona Murie, Global Director Health and Safety and Construction, Building and Woodworkers International

Pamela Miller, CoChair IPEN, International Persistent Organic Pollutants Elimination Network

Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, UK

Fernanda Giannasi, Civil, Health and Safety Engineer, Retired Labour Inspector and Co-Founder of Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto (ABREA/ Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-Exposed), São Paulo, Brazil

Sugio Furuya, Coordinator, Asian Ban Asbestos Network, Japan

Omana George, Program Coordinator, Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong

Pooja Gupta, Coordinator, Indian Ban Asbestos Network (IBAN), India

Jagdish Patel, Director, Peoples Training and Research Centre, Gujarat, India

AR Chowdhury Repon, Executive Director, Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation, Bangladesh

Professor Domyung Paek, Ban Asbestos Network Korea, Seoul, Korea

Yuyun Ismawati Drwiega, BaliFokus Foundation, Indonesia

M. Darisman, Indonesia Ban Asbestos Network (INA-BAN) and Local Initiative for OHS Network (LION), Indonesia

Robert Vojakovic, President of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia, Perth, Australia

Professor Anna Nowak, National Centre for Asbestos-Related Diseases, Perth, Australia

Professor Ken Takahashi, Director, Asbestos Diseases Research Institute, Concord, Australia

Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future International, Europe

Dr. Evelyn Glensk, Bundesverband der Asbestose-Selbsthilfegruppen (Federal Association of German Asbestos Victims' Groups), Germany

Dr. Annie Thebaud-Mony, Researcher, Ban Asbestos France and Association Henri Pézerat, France

Mavis Nye, Mesothelioma Patient, President of the Mavis Nye Foundation, UK

Graham Dring, Chairperson, Asbestos Victims' Support Groups Forum, UK

Liz Darlison, Head of Services, Mesothelioma UK

Professor Rory O'Neill, Hazards Magazine/ University of Liverpool, UK

Hilda Palmer, UK Hazards Campaign

Kate Lee, Executive Officer, Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA, Australia

Jacques Faugeron, President, Association National de Défense des Victimes de l'Amiante (National Association for the Defence of Asbestos Victims), France

Sanjiv Pandita, Regional Representative, Suisse Solidar, Switzerland

Dr. Vithaya Kulsomboon, Chair of Rural Pharmacist Foundation, Thailand

Kathleen Ruff, Founder & Director, RightOnCanada

Paco Puche, Málaga Amianto Cero, Spain

Benedicto Martino Cruz, President, and José Luis Gómez Aranda, Vice President, la Asociación de Víctimas Afectadas por el Amianto en Cataluña (The Association of Victims Affected by Asbestos in Catalonia), Spain

Updates:

new cosignatories Dr. Sophia Kisting, Kate Lee, and Jacques Faugeron were added May 17, 2018;

Sanjiv Pandita and Dr. Vithaya Kulsomboon were added May 20, 2018;

Kathleen Ruff, Paco Puche, Benedicto Martino Cruz, Mick Antoniow and Francisco Báez Baquet were added May 30, 2018

¹ Kazan-Allen L. *Desperate Time for Asbestos Pedlars*. April 20, 2018.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-blogzxa140.php>

Allen D., Kazan-Allen L. *Dramatic Fall in Asbestos Production*. May 3, 2018.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/da-lka-dramatic-fall-in-asbestos-production.php>

² *Asbestos Policies of Major International Agencies*. Last updated: June 22, 2017.

http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_asb_polic_maj_int_agencies.php

³ Although China is also an asbestos producer, it uses most of what it produces.

⁴ Kazan-Allen L. *Asbestos Showdown in Geneva*. May 10, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-asbestos-showdown-in-geneva.php>

⁵ Allen D, Kazan-Allen L. *Global Asbestos Mortality Data*. October 12, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/da-lka-global-asbestos-mortality-data.php>

⁶ From May 15-18, 2018 the second International Seminar entitled “Brazil without Asbestos,” is due to take place in São Paulo, Brazil.

<http://brasilsemamianto.com.br/>

⁷ *Media Release: Indian Ban Asbestos Network Established*. December 16, 2017.

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Tewary K. *Compensating Asbestosis Victims in Kolkata*. October 31, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/kt-compensating-asbestosis-victims-in-kolkata.php>

⁸ Kazan-Allen L. *The Fall of the Asbestos Empire*. September 17, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-the-fall-of-the-asbestos-empire.php>

⁹ *Press Release: Urgent need for banning asbestos in Indonesia to avoid large increases in lung cancer rates and other asbestos related diseases in coming decades - says Canadian Health Professor*. July 28, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/indonesia-jakarta-press-rel-from-wkshp-and-meetings-jul-25-28-2017.pdf>

¹⁰ *The need for a Pacific wide ban on asbestos*. September 21, 2017.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/cook-islands-sprep-wp-13-1-need-pacific-wide-ban-on-asbestos.pdf>

¹¹ Kotoloane P. *Global Asbestos Awareness Event: Standing together against Asbestos*. May 5, 2018.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/pk-glob-asb-awareness-event-standing-together-against-asbestos.php>

¹² European Commission. *Parliamentary Answers*. April 10, 2018.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2018-000862&language=EN>

¹³ ISSA. *Declaration on Asbestos*. 2004.

http://ibasecretariat.org/issa_dec.pdf

¹⁴ *The great debate on occupational cancer*. May 8, 2018.

<https://www.iosh.co.uk/en/News/ICOH%20occupational%20cancer%20debate>

¹⁵ ICOH. *Dublin Statement on Occupational Health - New Avenues for Prevention of Occupational Cancer and Other Severe Occupational Health*. May 4, 2018.

<http://www.icohweb.org/site/multimedia/news/pdf/Dublin%20Statement%20on%20OH.pdf>