

Plenary Presentation

7.4 PRESENTATION OF THE HENDRIK AFRIKA AWARD TO FERNANDO JOSÉ CHIERICI

THABO MAKWEYA

MEC

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends,

I am deeply honoured to be able to present this award here tonight.

(A moment of silence for the thousands who have passed away and are still suffering due to asbestos related diseases.)

This award is very special for us Africans.

Hendrik worked on the mill as a child in Prieska.

He had no protection, he was never warned about the dangers of his work with asbestos fibres and was paid very little - if anything.

His mother died of mesothelioma and in his 50's Hendrik was diagnosed with asbestosis.

Hendrik was going to be with us today, but sadly he is not well enough to travel.

Hendrik represents a proud community of people. Despite being devastated by the effects of asbestos related diseases they still showed the strength and courage to fight their murderers.

I am very pleased to hand over this award to comrade Fernando José Chierici.

Fernando, like Hendrik, is a victim of asbestos and has suffered, tremendously. As the former leader of ABREA he is honoured for his work, commitment and energy in fighting the asbestos industry in Brazil.

Sorrow, misery, and agony has characterised the lives of many asbestos sufferers, their close relatives and friends. Hopelessness and fear of environmental exposure is still a dreadful threat to many of us.

It is sharing such exciting moments with people of the calibre of Fernando José Chierici that we get more inspired and encouraged to intensify our struggle against the use of asbestos.

The stark reality we are confronted with is that asbestos is a killer and many people have already surrendered their lives by having been directly or indirectly exposed.

Comrade Fernando José Chierici, for all of us and those other iron men and women

in your state, you make us proud.

It is with pride that the whole Congress accords you on behalf of all other asbestos sufferers this gift of honour and respect. Your tenacity, perseverance, courage and gift of life makes you immortal. There is no amount of death that can consume such a gift.

At the end of this conference, let this reward serve as a reminder to all of us to:

Never again allow asbestos mining

Never again be misled by industry about the deadly effects of asbestos

Never again allow multinationals to exploit the developing world and its people.

May the spirit of Hendrik Africa and Fernando José Chierici live on in our work - here in Brazil, down on the southern point of Africa and around the world.