



ITUC - Asia Pacific

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International Trade Union Confederation - Asia Pacific

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For Immediate Release 5th April 2019

Media Release

ITUC-AP Follow-up Meeting on Asbestos “Realising an Asbestos-free World” 2-3 April 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal

Asia Trade Unions commit to new campaign to fight for chrysotile asbestos bans across Asia

Asian Governments urged to take swift action to protect workers and communities from cancer and ban chrysotile asbestos

The second ITUC AP (International Trade Union Confederation Asia-Pacific) Regional Conference on ‘Realizing an Asbestos Free World’ concluded this week in Kathmandu Nepal, with strong commitments from trade unions across Asia to lead national ban campaigns and work together to demand a halt to the use of chrysotile asbestos and prevent future cancers.

The ITUC AP initiated conference attracted trade union representatives from 12 countries across Asia. These included continuing big users of the deadly asbestos fibre India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines and Malaysia as well as trade unions from countries that have previously banned such as Japan, Nepal and Australia as well as occupational specialist from the ILO (International Labour Organisation).

The meeting updated information on latest research including estimates of 255,000 deaths per year attributable to asbestos exposure and the latest countries to ban chrysotile asbestos Canada in 2018 and Brazil in 2017. The meeting heard global production has dropped rapidly in recent years to just over one million tons estimated in 2018, from its peak of 4.5 million tons in the 1980’s. Alarming Asia is the one region remaining in the world as a big chrysotile asbestos consumer. Over 80% of world consumption is now in this region, despite what is now known about the deadly consequences of human exposure to this fibre.

Trade unions combining with victims and health groups, have led the campaigns in many of the 66 countries that have so far banned asbestos use and trade. That is because trade union members working directly with chrysotile asbestos make up most of those who are dying from that exposure. The meeting discussed strategy and developed action plans nationally, regionally and globally to achieve a ban on chrysotile asbestos in those countries still using as well as regional and global action to stop its use.

General Secretary ITUC- AP Mr Shoya Yoshida declared ‘The day of an “Asbestos-Free World” should come and it is up to us to decide when that day would come. Let’s campaign for an “Asbestos-Free World” to our members, workers, society and governments. This meeting has been a new step toward our goal of an “Asbestos-free world”.



The meeting:

Condemns the needless deaths being caused by the continuing use of chrysotile asbestos when safer alternatives are available for all products previously containing asbestos.

Condemns attempts by the asbestos industry to misrepresent the evidence on the deadly health impacts of chrysotile asbestos on exposed workers and communities, including misrepresenting positions of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the ILO. Resolves to make strong efforts to build solidarity within and among trade unions and others to share resources and effectively study, respond and defeat this lobby group.

Demands no more delays to the reform to the voting system at the Rotterdam Convention, a global convention that lists hazardous chemicals and requires prior warning to importing countries of those chemicals. The meeting demanded Article 22 of this Convention be changed to allow a 75% vote to list a chemical and that chrysotile asbestos be listed onto the hazardous chemical register.

Demands improved diagnosis and just compensation for workers and other victims of asbestos related diseases

Commits to organise international, regional and national actions and campaigns to promote the advice of WHO and ILO in eliminating asbestos diseases and urge all countries to stop using chrysotile asbestos and asbestos-containing materials in our countries and globally.

Calls on governments across this region to promote decent work and healthy jobs and assist transition to the manufacturing of safer alternatives than asbestos.

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