

ROCA - Rotterdam Convention Alliance

ROCA is an Alliance of Environmental, Labour and Health organizations around the world working to promote the full and effective implementation of the Rotterdam Convention

October 31, 2008 Update by Kathleen Ruff, Coordinator of the Rotterdam Convention Alliance, currently attending COP4 in Rome

CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS INDUSTRY AND ENDOSULFAN INDUSTRY WON HERE IN ROME

1) At 4.40 pm today, Friday, Dr Barry Reville, who had been appointed by the Chair of the Conference, Andrea Repetti, to work with a "Friends of the Chair" group to seek to find a way to achieve consensus regarding the recommendations of the Chemical Review Committee to list chrysotile asbestos and endosulfan for prior informed consent, reported to the Conference of the Parties that he had not succeeded in obtaining consensus for the listing. He presented a proposal that the issue of listing chrysotile asbestos be put off until the next Conference of the Parties, which will be in 2011.

The EU then put forward a Declaration to the plenary that

- the EU expresses its deepest concern over the failure to list chrysotile asbestos and endosulfan, when they have met all the criteria of the Convention for listing
- the EU underlines that Parties have the right to voluntarily apply the Prior Informed Consent procedure
- the EU calls on other Parties to apply the Prior Informed Consent procedure for endosulfan and chrysotile asbestos in a voluntary manner until the next Conference of the Parties at which the issue of listing these products will be once again examined.

Dr Reville said he shared these concerns and that the non-listing of products that meet all the Convention's criteria has the capacity to undermine the Convention. He stated that we need to have those countries who refuse to allow the listing to give their underlying reasons.

A number of countries spoke up expressing their support for the EU and Australian views.

Paraguay said that it regrets that countries like Paraguay had come so far and at such cost to achieve such disappointing results.

2) For endosulfan three countries had blocked the listing (India, Pakistan and the Sudan).

The industry lobby has succeeded in ensuring that developing countries will not enjoy their right under the Convention to be informed of the hazards of chrysotile asbestos and endosulfan before these products are shipped to them.

That the Parties here have failed to deliver on this minimal human right, which is the

lowest hurdle that could possibly be set, shows what strong, enforceable protections are provided to corporate interests by the WTO and elsewhere, whereas the right to health and a safe environment has virtually no protection under international regulatory systems.

It is clear that protection of human health and the environment have very low priority.

Canada in the plenary, once again, stayed silent. Any tiny hope that Canada might show leadership and put human health ahead of political interests by supporting the listing of chrysotile asbestos were dashed.

The Canadian delegation did an extremely good job for the chrysotile industry here in Rome and should be sent an award in recognition of their devoted and successful service.