

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

Intervention at Plenary Session of COP4, Tuesday, October 28, 2008 by Kathleen Ruff, international co-ordinator, Rotterdam Convention Alliance.

On behalf of the Rotterdam Convention Alliance, an alliance of environmental, health and labour organizations from around the world, I wish to state that we strongly object to a delay in the listing of chrysotile asbestos as a hazardous chemical under the Convention.

A right delayed is a right denied. Delay is a way to undermine and destroy the Convention. The tobacco industry created delay for decades for "more studies" to prevent information on the hazards of tobacco from being made known.

The Rotterdam Convention gives a legally binding right to information about hazardous chemicals that have been put on the Convention's list. But more than that, it gives the right to independent scientific information, uncontaminated by commercial and political interests.

There is an abundance of industry-financed information, even here at this Conference, denying that chrysotile asbestos is a hazardous chemical in order to promote greater sales and greater profits from this hazardous chemical, which is banned or severely restricted in every industrialized country. Such information is not independent information. It represents a conflict of interest.

The 31 scientists from around the world, who the countries here today appointed to make up the Chemical Review Committee, have completed their independent, scientific work and called for chrysotile asbestos to be listed as a hazardous chemical under the Convention.

Countries who are refusing to let the Convention be implemented on chrysotile asbestos are denying a right, not for themselves but for OTHER countries, especially developing countries, whom we have heard here today call for their right to prior informed consent to be respected.

We face the danger that the Convention will become meaningless by listing hazardous chemicals that are not traded commercially in any significant manner and that those hazardous chemicals that are traded and where there is an industry lobby, will not.

We call on those countries who have opposed listing of chrysotile asbestos to withdraw their objection to listing.

If they refuse to do so, then we call on them to give the specific reasons as to why they are blocking the Convention.

Thank you.