



BWI • BHI • BTI • IBB • ICM



Re: International Chrysotile Association Attacks on Rotterdam Convention

Rotterdam Convention Secretariat
Geneva, Switzerland

Sent by emails to: brs@un.org and pic@fao.org May 30, 2022

Dear Rotterdam Convention Secretariat,

We are writing to you to express our extreme disquiet and concern over the attacks on the Rotterdam Convention (RC) and Chemical Review Committee (CRC) by the International Chrysotile Association (ICA) – the propaganda machine representing global asbestos stakeholders.¹

Our organizations represent civil society groups in Asia, Oceania, Latin America and Europe. Collectively, we speak for millions of trade unionists, asbestos victims, medical professionals, technical experts and concerned citizens. We have seen at previous RC Conferences of the Parties how a handful of countries, initially led by Canada and more latterly by Russia, have callously blocked the listing of chrysotile asbestos on Annex III of the RC despite overwhelming support by Parties to the Conference for chrysotile to be added to the Annex.

The ICA presence at the COP is a mystery to us. They are clearly a group with a vested commercial interest in preventing the RC from achieving its stated objectives:

“to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among Parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm; to contribute to the environmentally sound use of those hazardous chemicals, by facilitating information exchange about their characteristics, by providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and by disseminating these decisions to Parties.”²

As tobacco companies are now barred from meetings of the ILO and WHO we once again ask you why the ICA is allowed to participate as an Observer at the COP 2022 of the RC and is allowed to hold a side-event with the contemptible and provocative title: SDGs: The contribution of chrysotile asbestos.³ The use of a class 1 carcinogen to promote Sustainable Development Goals is a logical impossibility; the title of this proposed side event is, said British expert Rory O’Neill, both “disingenuous and damaging.”⁴

¹ ICA Briefing Rotterdam Convention COP-10 MEETING – 2021-2022.

https://chrysotileassociation.com/data/ICA_Rotterdam_Convention_2021-2022_full_document.pdf

² Website of the Rotterdam Convention. Accessed May 25, 2022.

<http://www.pic.int/>

³ Schedule of side events at the meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, 6 - 17 June 2022, Geneva, Switzerland.

<http://www.brsmeas.org/Portals/4/download.aspx?d=UNEP-FAO-CHW-RC-POPS-COPS2021-SideEvent-Schedule-20220517.English.pdf>

⁴ United Nations. Do you know all 17 SDGs? Accessed May 25, 2022.

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Given the increased frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters, the state-of-the-art knowledge about the hazard posed by chrysotile asbestos,⁵ the UN Human Rights Council Resolution (2021) recognizing the right of human beings to live a life free from exposures to deadly toxins,⁶ plans by the ILO to make the right to healthy work a fundamental human right and other similar developments, the inclusion of the ICA side event on the official RC program is an outrage.

The proposed ICA side event does **not** make a positive contribution to the discussion at the COP. It is a propaganda tool to spread confusion and uncertainty amongst delegates in order to frustrate progress being made which would protect vulnerable populations from even more years of toxic exposures. Asbestos stakeholders are desperate to prevent importing countries being provided essential information to make informed decisions about whether chrysotile asbestos and products containing it can be safely used by their citizens. The right-to-know the human health and environmental risks posed by importing asbestos is not tantamount to a ban on asbestos but is most certainly a boon to decision-makers.

We therefore call on you to rescind the invitation for this side event and eradicate it from the program. Furthermore, we call on the Secretariat to take steps to bar the ICA and other pro-asbestos lobbying groups from attending convention meetings.

Due to the commencement of the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on June 6, 2022, we ask for a reply to this letter by June 5. Please reply to Laurie Kazan-Allen by email at: lkaz@btconnect.com

If we fail to receive a reply to this communication, we will upload it in its totality to the internet to raise awareness of the profit-driven and despicable attempts to undermine a multilateral treaty intended to protect global populations from exposures to deadly substances.

Sincerely,

Ambet Yuson, BWI General Secretary
Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI)

Sugio Furuya, Coordinator, Asian Ban Asbestos Secretariat (ABAN)

Sanjiv Pandita, on behalf of the Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV)

Muchamad Darisman, on behalf of the Indonesian Ban Asbestos Network (INA-BAN)

Surya Ferdian, on behalf of the Local Initiatives OSH Network (LION)
Indonesia

Eliezer João de Souza, President
Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto [Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-Exposed /ABREA]

Zuleica Nycz, Director
Associação de Saúde Ambiental Toxisfera [Toxisfera Environmental Health Association]
Brazil

⁵ *Asbestos policies of international agencies*. Accessed May 25, 2022.

http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_asb_polic_maj_int_agencies.php

⁶ Kazan-Allen, L. *The Asbestos Industry 2021: Debunked, Discredited & Defunct*. November 11, 2021.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-asbestos-industry-2021-debunked-discredited-defunct.php>

Robert Vojakovic, President
Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia

Kate Lee, Executive Officer
Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, Australia

Liam O'Brien, Assistant Secretary
Australian Council of Trade Unions

Felix Gnehm, Executive Director
Solidar Suisse

Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator
International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)

Jawad Qasrawi, Hazards Publications UK