



**Union Aid Abroad APHEDA**  
The global justice organisation of the Australian Union movement



**A-BAN**  
Asian Ban Asbestos Network



## PRESS RELEASE

December 15, 2016

### Historic Canadian Asbestos Ban!

Civil society groups from around the world have warmly welcomed the news that the Canadian government is to outlaw the use of asbestos.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Canada, one-time leader in the production of chrysotile (white) asbestos, has taken this step is the latest victory for the global campaign to ban asbestos.

The significance of Canada's U-turn is enormous as it was the Canadian Government which brought a case against the French asbestos ban to the World Trade Organization,<sup>2</sup> Canadian politicians who led the veto of United Nations actions to regulate the global asbestos trade<sup>3</sup> and Canadian civil servants and vested interests which orchestrated global pro-asbestos marketing initiatives. Commenting on this development, Brazilian engineer Fernanda Giannasi, leader of the ban asbestos campaign in Latin America, said:

“The action by Ottawa gives me hope that one day soon Brazil, another asbestos producing country, will also ban asbestos. My country is now the world's third biggest producer and fourth biggest user of asbestos; the mining, processing, use and export of the killer dust is a potent threat to all Brazilians as well as citizens in importing countries. If Canada can ban asbestos, so can we!”

Reacting to news of the ban, Sugio Furuya of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN), paid tribute:

“to all those who worked so hard to reverse Canada's asbestos policy. On behalf of ABAN, I would like to congratulate the Canadian asbestos victims, campaigners, trade unionists, doctors, scientists, politicians, journalists and others whose efforts have resulted in this momentous change.”

<sup>1</sup> *Canada to ban asbestos use by 2018*. December 15, 2016.

<https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/canada-to-ban-asbestos-use-by-2018/article33331224/>

<sup>2</sup> *WTO Upholds French Ban on Chrysotile*. May 5, 2011.

[http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_can\\_wto\\_appeal\\_res.php](http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka_can_wto_appeal_res.php)

<sup>3</sup> See: *Chronological Record of Chrysotile Debate at the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention (COP3) on October 10, 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland*.

[http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_chron\\_rott\\_chrys\\_deb\\_oct\\_06.php](http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka_chron_rott_chrys_deb_oct_06.php)

*Canada, A Pariah State*. June 27, 2011.

<http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka-canada-pariah-state.php>

Trade unionist Anup Srivastava from the Building and Woodworkers International was part of the 2010 Asian Solidarity Mission to Quebec.<sup>4</sup> Reflecting on his experience during that trip in light of what has happened in Ottawa this week, he said:

“We in the trade union movement are delighted that finally Canada is creating history by bringing an end to all the pseudo science and has put to rest safe use theory debates on Asbestos. This is a landmark development and tribute to the thousands of workers and families who have died and continue to suffer across the world. For the workers’ movement, the battle for a global ban continues.”

UK and Australian activists are urging Justin Trudeau’s government to support initiatives to minimize deadly asbestos exposures with Executive Officer Kate Lee of Australia’s Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA) highlighting the potent risks posed by continuing asbestos use in the industrializing world:

“Asia is a dumping ground for a rapacious industry that will not stop – despite overwhelming global evidence that asbestos kills and is a major health and economic cost to a country, the asbestos industry lobby will stop at nothing to turn a profit at the expense of human life through extensive asbestos manufacturing across Asia. We now need to mobilize this new commitment of the Canadian government to drive asbestos from the poorest countries on the planet. If we banned asbestos globally today, we know hundreds of thousands of lives would be saved.”

Speaking on behalf of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK, Chairperson Graham Dring echoed Ms. Lee’s call to arms expressing the hope that Canada, one-time asbestos denier, would now support United Nations action under the Rotterdam Convention to impose regulations on the global asbestos trade.

The Canadian asbestos ban is a harbinger of things to come; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the time is past when a dangerous and discredited technology can be allowed to endanger the lives of innocent populations. We call for justice for all those injured or killed by asbestos poisoning, an immediate and comprehensive international ban on asbestos, government action to remediate asbestos contamination of national infrastructures and a recategorization of the asbestos industry as persona non grata by international agencies, national governments and decision makers around the world.

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<sup>4</sup> *Asian Solidarity Delegation to Quebec, Canada: Events in Canada*. December 18, 2010. [http://www.ibasecretariat.org/quebec\\_mission\\_2010\\_arch\\_events.php](http://www.ibasecretariat.org/quebec_mission_2010_arch_events.php)

### **Notes for Editors**

1. For further information, please: email Sugio Furuya (ABAN) at [2009aban@gmail.com](mailto:2009aban@gmail.com) or Fernanda Giannasi (ABREA) at [fer.giannasi@terra.com.br](mailto:fer.giannasi@terra.com.br)
  
2. For more information on the groups which have issued this press release see the websites of:
  - Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA  
<http://www.apheda.org.au>
  
  - Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto [Brazilian Association of Asbestos Victims /ABREA]  
<http://www.abrea.org.br>
  
  - Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK  
<http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk>
  
  - Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC)  
<http://www.amrc.org.hk>
  
  - Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN)  
<http://anroev.org/aban>
  
  - Building and Woodworkers International (BWI)  
<http://www.bwint.org>
  
  - International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)  
<http://ibasecretariat.org>