



Press Release

Immediate Use

ACTION ON RUSSIAN ASBESTOS

LONDON, APRIL 22, 2013: To mark International Workers' Memorial Day, a demonstration is being held on April 26 outside the Russian Embassy in London calling for an end to the mining, sale and export of asbestos from Russia.

Asbestos-related disease kills more than 100,000 workers every year, according to the International Labor Organization.

Russia is, by far, the world's biggest producer of asbestos, mining one million tonnes of asbestos fibre every year; this equates to half of all global production.

Over recent years, Russia has assumed the leadership of a global asbestos propaganda campaign that targets governments and consumers in developing countries where neither workers nor members of the public have any protection from hazardous exposures to asbestos.

The April 26th demonstration will be the first asbestos protest outside a Russian Embassy anywhere in the world. It is being organized by asbestos victims, trade unionists and campaigners whose letter sent two months ago to Ambassador Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko has been ignored.

Commenting on this week's activity, Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat and one of the coorganizers of this demonstration, said:

“It is deplorable that the Russian Government aids and abets the asbestos industry. Despite the fact that the use of asbestos has been banned during the construction of the Sochi Olympics, it is understood that the Russian Government intends to block UN plans to regulate the global trade in asbestos at an upcoming meeting in Geneva. This double standard is as hypocritical as it is deplorable. If asbestos is too dangerous for international athletes, surely it is too dangerous for Filipino, Thai and Indian workers.”

Notes to Editors

- For further information, contact: Laurie Kazan-Allen from IBAS by email: lka@btinternet.com or phone: 0208 958 3887; John McClean from the GMB by email: John.McCclean@gmb.org.uk or phone: 07710 631329; or Tony Whitston from the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK by email: asbestos.mcr@gmail.com or phone: 0161 636 7555
- The demonstration will take place on Friday, April 26, 2013 from noon till 1 p.m. in front of The Russian Embassy at 6-7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QP.
- The sixth meeting of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention takes place in Geneva, Switzerland from April 28 to May 10, 2013.¹
- The World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, the European Union, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the International Commission on Occupational Health, the United Nations, the Collegium Ramazzini, groups representing global labor and many other international agencies and national governments agree that exposure to all types of asbestos is hazardous and should be prevented, ideally by banning the use of all types of asbestos.²
- The International Labor Organization estimates that there are more than 100,000 asbestos deaths a year caused by occupational exposures to asbestos. When deaths from other types of exposures, such as domestic and environmental, are factored into the equation, the annual global asbestos death toll is much higher.
- In recent years, annual production of Russian asbestos has been one million tonnes. Other big producers are China, Brazil and Kazakhstan which in 2011 mined 440,000 tonnes (t), 302,300t and 223,100t respectively. The majority of asbestos use nowadays takes place in Asia and Eastern Europe; in 2011, the top three users were: China (637,735t), India (321,803t) and Russia (251,427t).
- The use of asbestos has been restricted or banned in most industrialized countries. In India, Thailand, the Philippines and elsewhere asbestos is used without any precautions being taken.³

¹ Kazan-Allen L. *The Rotterdam Convention 2013*. April 18, 2013.
<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-rotterdam-convention-2013-primer-apr-18.php>

² For more detail on the asbestos policy of international agencies see:
http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_asb_polic_maj_int_agencies.php

³ *List of national asbestos bans.*

http://ibasecretariat.org/alpha_ban_list.php

Video clips showing cutting of asbestos-containing products in Iran:

http://ibasecretariat.org/asb_reality_video_nov2010.php

India's Asbestos Time Bomb.

http://ibasecretariat.org/india_asb_time_bomb.pdf