

**PRESS RELEASE**

*Annual Conference of the South East Asia Ban Asbestos Network.*

On September 13, 2018, the Annual Conference of the South East Asia Ban Asbestos Network (SEABAN) was held at La Thanh hotel, Hanoi and was broadcast live on GTV multimedia channels.

Attended by over 100 participants from Vietnam and 10 other countries from the Asia Pacific region the focus of the meeting is to promote the urgent need for banning asbestos in South East Asian countries and prevent future asbestos related cancers occurring in the population. The meeting will also learn of progress towards banning in countries such as Vietnam.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have concluded for some decades that asbestos is a carcinogen in humans, especially causing lung cancer, laryngeal cancer, ovarian cancer, mesothelioma and other lung diseases such as asbestosis. In 2004, the WHO estimated that every year there were over 100.000 deaths due to exposure to asbestos. More recent international estimates from the Global Burden of Disease Study, puts the annual death rate at more than 220,000 per year. That same study estimates 2000 deaths per year in Vietnam already from chrysotile asbestos.

Already 64 countries in the world have banned the use of chrysotile asbestos.

On January 1, 2018, the Prime Minister signed the Resolution 01/NQ-CP, which assigned the Ministry of Construction “creating a roadmap to stop the use of white asbestos to stop the production of asbestos roofing from 2023”. On August 7, 2018, the Committee on Ethnic Minorities Affairs signed the Decision 476/QĐ-UBND approving the propaganda plan for mobilize ethnic minorities to stop using white asbestos.

However, Mr. Hoang Xuan Luong – Chairman of the Action Group for Justice, Health and Environment said that some interest groups are still trying to delay the implementation of the Decision, making white asbestos still widely used in industrial products, especially in fibre-cement roofing in Vietnam. The fact is, more than 95% asbestos roofing is delivered to ethnic minorities and mountainous areas, creating a hazardous environment for ethnic minority peoples.

For those above reasons, the Government’s Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs in collaboration with the Action Group for Justice, Health and Environment, with the support from APHEDA, Australian Government, Asia Ban Network (ABAN), International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) and international trade union Building Workers International (BWI), SOLIDAR Suisse, Asia Monitor Resource Centre and other international organizations, conducted this conference to find solutions to accelerate the implementation of the Vietnam Government’s Resolution on banning asbestos before 2023; strengthen a global network to promote activities to stop the use of white asbestos; discuss reform of the Rotterdam Convention, making a global ban on asbestos an act of the entire human race.

Participants in the conference include: 100 delegates from government ministries, domestic and international, asbestos ban networks from across ASEAN, relevant organizations and associations as well as local press agencies.

Issues related to the roadmap for banning asbestos will also be discussed and presented at the conference; Opportunities and challenges of banning asbestos in Vietnam; scientific evidence of the harmful effect of

asbestos; substitute materials for asbestos; experience of processing and replacing asbestos material in Australia; experience of banning asbestos in Japan and efforts to list white asbestos into the Rotterdam Convention globally.

The conference on September 13, 2018 is part of the SEABAN annual conference. Side events include sharing experience from international delegates on stopping the use of asbestos and the discussion of the experience in how to collect and process asbestos materials will be live broadcast on GTV.

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