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## **NTUF calls for immediate reversal of Sri Lankan Government decision on Asbestos**

After the new National Government was formed in Sri Lanka in January 2015, the President, His Excellency Mithiripala Sirisena announced ban on Asbestos from January 2018. The scientists of Sri Lanka recommended to the Government to ban the usage of Asbestos, consequent to the report - ban was imposed, taking into note its harmful health and environmental impact.

In response to a sudden announcement of banning imports of Sri Lanka Tea to Russia, on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017 the Government of Sri Lanka decided to relax the ban on imports of Asbestos. As a result, trade unions, civil society organizations and other Non-Governmental organizations are protesting against this relaxation on the ban and negating the efforts of different stakeholders to make Sri Lanka Asbestos free.

Being a big country, Russia has resorted to *arm twisting* its weaker trade partner. It is unfortunate that the Sri Lankan Government has to give into this pressure tactics and accept hazardous material from Russia. The NTUF appeals to the Government of Sri Lanka to not give into the safe use theory of Chrysotile Asbestos being propagated by Asbestos exporting Governments lead by Russia.

It is our humble submission to the Government of Sri Lanka to follow the International Organizations such as the WHO and ILO and also the world's leading scientific community, which has called for a total ban on usage of all forms of Asbestos world over. The Sri Lankan Government took an inspiring decision to ban all forms of Asbestos, including Chrysotile, which is in wide usage and the Government should stick to its decision for a total ban by 2024.

The NTUF appeals to the global community to exert pressure on Sri Lankan Government to not to bow under pressure and to restore their earlier decision of banning Asbestos in Sri Lanka.

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