

**This morning, the BWI and the Global Unions issued the following statement on Chrysotile at the Rotterdam Convention meeting.**



**Global Unions statement on Chrysotile Asbestos for the Rotterdam Convention CoP 5 meeting in Geneva 20 – 24 June 2011**

In recognition of the severity of the global asbestos tragedy, Global Unions are calling on all Parties to the Rotterdam Convention to urgently support the listing of chrysotile asbestos for Prior Informed Consent.

Chrysotile asbestos is known to result in the death of more than 100,000 people every year. The CRC recommended the listing of chrysotile asbestos to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention at COP3 and again at COP4. Chrysotile asbestos meets all criteria for the listing. Its listing is only objected to by a tiny number of countries who have a vested interest in maintaining their lucrative trade in this potent human carcinogen.

Failure to include chrysotile asbestos on the PIC list will ensure that the asbestos epidemic, which has taken so many lives in the developed world, will spread further in developing countries. Reports received from colleagues and international organisations indicate that national incidences of asbestos disease are already increasing in Latin America and Asia.

For more than twenty years, the Global Unions have been at the forefront of the global campaign to eliminate the diseases caused by asbestos. The Global Unions asbestos policy stipulates that the only “safe use” of asbestos is not to use it at all. Our sustained campaign on asbestos awareness and disease prevention has included national and international activities to raise awareness amongst our members, the public, governments and international agencies. In the year 2000, the Building and Woodworkers International launched a worldwide campaign among its affiliates, reiterating the need for a global ban and calling for the proper management of installed asbestos. The BWI has an ongoing programme of activities with workers and other partners in the building and construction materials industries, giving advice and training on the hazards of asbestos and measures to prevent exposures. Affiliated unions have been instrumental in achieving national bans and improving prevention of exposure to chrysotile asbestos in a number of countries. Other Global Unions support this campaign and share general concerns in all other affected sector.

In 2005, after extensive consultation of national centres and GUFs, the ICFTU (now ITUC) reached a consensus for a ban on the use of chrysotile asbestos. This position refers to asbestos in all its forms. On April 28, International Workers Memorial Day, thousands of trade union members engaged in peaceful demonstrations and petitions at Canadian Embassies and Consulates to convince the Canadian government to call a halt to its aggressive marketing and promotion of asbestos in developing countries.

We call on Canada and other asbestos stakeholders at the COP to accept that the time has come to include chrysotile on the PIC list so that developing countries can make informed decisions on a subject of such deadly importance.

***An initiative of the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs)***