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## Export of Chrysotile Asbestos must be controlled under Rotterdam Convention

Exports of chrysotile asbestos must be controlled to limit the death toll from the deadly substance in developing nations, the ACTU said today.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said that the 6th Annual Conference on the Rotterdam Convention, in Geneva, Switzerland, must put chrysotile asbestos on its list of hazardous substances that needed to be monitored for export.

“Asbestos has been banned in construction in Australia since 1987, but is still used as a cheap material in developing nations in our region,” Ms Kearney said.

“This means that workers in these countries are being exposed to dangerous fibres which will cause a huge death toll for decades to come.

“Australia must use its influence in the region to limit the use of asbestos and develop substitutes that will not leave generations of people at risk of an early death.

“We know from our own experience of the horrific toll of asbestos.

“The deadly substance was part of the fabric of this nation. About every third domestic dwelling built between 1945 and 1987 is thought to contain asbestos. Thousands of Australians were exposed to asbestos, and deaths from asbestos-related disease are still to peak.

“We call on every country attending the 6th Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention to support putting chrysotile asbestos on the Convention's list of hazardous substances.”

“The Convention's expert scientific body (the Chemical Review Committee) is recommending this for the fourth time and they must be listened to.

“Chrysotile asbestos is the only asbestos that is still traded today. There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile, are hazardous to health, and can cause death years after exposure.

“It is shameful that asbestos is being used in developing nations, in spite of all we know about its dangers to health. The asbestos industry is exporting a deadly product while continuing to deny its hazards.

“The Rotterdam Convention requires all nations who export hazardous substances to obtain prior informed consent, thus enabling countries to protect the health of their citizens.

“Listing chrysotile asbestos is an important step to better regulating this deadly substance.”

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