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June 13, 2011

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

On June 20, 2011, the 143 countries that have ratified the U.N. Rotterdam Convention will meet in Geneva. At that meeting, the delegates will decide whether to approve the recommendation of the Convention's expert scientific body to put chrysotile asbestos (the only form of asbestos traded in the world today) on the Convention's list of hazardous substances.

For more than seven years, Canada, along with a handful of other countries, has blocked this recommendation, thus putting protection of the interests of the asbestos industry ahead of protection of global health.

We ask that at the June Conference of the Parties, Canada, for the first time, support the listing of chrysotile asbestos.

The purpose of the Rotterdam Convention is to bring about responsible trade of hazardous substances by requiring that exporting countries obtain "prior informed consent" before shipping substances, which are on the Convention's list, to another country.

The Convention's mission is environmental justice. In particular, it empowers developing countries by providing them with a basic human right – the right to information and the right to refuse hazardous substances that a country does not have the means to safely manage. This critical information thus enables developing countries to more effectively protect their citizens from harm.


We ask you to support the listing of chrysotile asbestos for the following reasons:

- 1) Chrysotile asbestos is listed as a hazardous substance under Canadian law. It is, in our view, wrong to apply a double standard of inferior protection for people in developing countries.
- 2) The Convention's expert body (the Chemical Review Committee), composed of 31 scientists from around the world including Canada, has repeatedly recommended, after careful consideration, that chrysotile asbestos should be put on the Convention's list of hazardous substances. By blocking the recommendation of the scientific experts, Canada is jeopardizing the very purpose of the Convention, which is to put scientific evidence ahead of political interests.

3) By putting the interests of the asbestos industry ahead of the protection of human health and the environment, Canada, in our view, is not acting as a responsible global citizen, thus harming Canada's international reputation.

We would appreciate your immediate response on this critical matter relating to international co-operation to protect environmental, worker, and human health around the world.

Sincerely,



Dr Jean Zigby, CCFP, FCFP, MDCM;
President, Canadian Association of
Physicians for the Environment



Kathleen Ruff, Senior Human Rights
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ON BEHALF OF:

ORGANISATIONS

Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Medical Association

Confédération des syndicats nationaux

Association des médecins spécialistes en santé communautaire du Québec

MiningWatch Canada

Sierra Club Canada

La Ligue des droits et libertés du Québec

La Société pour vaincre la pollution, Montréal

Environmental Defence Canada

Alternatives, Québec

Canadian Auto Workers-Canada

Nature Québec

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Canada

Prevent Cancer Now

Public Service Alliance of Canada

Centre justice et foi/revue *Relations*, Québec

Ecojustice Canada
Canadian Union of Public Employees
International Longshore & Warehouse Union Canada
Science for Peace, Canada
United Steelworkers Local 480
Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice
British Columbia & Yukon Territory, Building & Construction Trades Council
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Canadian Federation of University Women
International Longshoremens Association Local 1657
KAN Centre for Environment and Development
National Network on Environments and Women's Health
Construction and Specialized Workers' Union Local 1611
Canadian Public Health Association
Asbestos-related Research, Education & Advocacy Fund
Canadian Association of University Teachers
Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health
Saskatchewan Provincial Building & Construction Trades Council
International Women's Rights Project
Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Calgary Raging Grannies
Breast Cancer Action Montreal
Canadian Society of Asbestos Victims
Saskatchewan Regional Council of Carpenters & Millwrights
Parksville/Qualicum KAIROS
New Brunswick Lung Association
Injured Workers All Across Canada (IWAAC)
Boilermakers Lodge 359
Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
Reach for Unbleached, Comox, British Columbia
Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia
Greenspiration
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S.H.A.M.E., Sarnia's Hometown Activist Movement Emerging
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Environics Trust, India

Pathar Khadan Majdoor Sangh, India

Ban Asbestos Network Korea, South Korea

Asian Citizen's Center for Environment and Health, South Korea

ASSOCIATED LABOR UNIONS - TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, Korea

Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control, Uganda

Ban Asbestos Network of India

Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Australia

Friends of the Earth Korea

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, United States

Ban Asbestos Network Japan

Organisation Béninoise pour la promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique, BÉNIN

Asian Ban Asbestos Network

ABREA - Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto (Brazilian Asbestos Exposed People Association), Brazil

Center for Research on Occupational Diseases, Iran

Pesticide Action Network - Ethiopia

Jagdish Patel ,Peoples Training & Research Centre, India

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International Ban Asbestos Secretariat, UK

Rural Workers Organisation, Tamil Nadu ,India

La Red de Acción sobre Plaguicidas y Alternativas en México y el Centro de Análisis y Acción en Tóxicos y sus Alternativas, Mexico

Comité Anti Amiante Jussieu, France

Pollution Control Association of Liberia

New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, U.S.

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Merseyside Asbestos Victim Support Group, U.K.
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