

**Spreeksuggesties**  
**Z.E. de heer Van der Tempel**

**ten behoeve van de**  
**Asbest en POP bijeenkomst in Astana, 20 april 2009**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to speak before you today. The Netherlands is the name giver to one of the pillars under the global chemicals policies: the Rotterdam Convention. The name of Rotterdam, being one of the largest harbors in the world, reminds us of the international character of chemicals trade.

As you know, the modern world that we have build in the beginning of the 21st century, presents us with challenges that are very diverse in nature: the production of adequate food and clean water resources, efficient mobility that serves our social and economic ambitions, energy efficient and safe housing... For all these issues the application of chemicals, including naturally occurring minerals, can play an essential role in working towards solutions: safeguarding our crops, allowing for innovative mobility or effective isolation of our buildings.

However sometimes chemicals are not so much part of the solution, but rather part of a problem. This occurs when chemicals, including certain minerals, are used uninformed or are applied while their intrinsic properties are not well respected. Then the health of our citizens, our workforce or our environment can be severely harmed.

The Netherlands has had thorough experience with asbestos, both 'bleu', 'brown' and 'white'. From the beginning of last century and up to the eighties, the Netherlands' industries and households enjoyed asbestos for isolation, flooring,

car brakes, cement, etc. An estimated total of 1.4 million tonnes of asbestos was used in my country.

Already in 1930 early warning signs of harmful effects become known in the Netherlands and in 1949 'asbestosis' was officially recognized as working related disease. It took until 1977 before the first ban of use of blue asbestos was issued, and only in the nineteen eighties it was acknowledged that in all asbestos forms, fibers of harmful lengths and diameters are found, therefore all posing risks. But not before 1993 a ban on asbestos in the workplace was implemented in the Netherlands and only in 1998 a full ban, also for household use, came into force.

This milestone did however not mark the end of asbestos problems, but rather the beginning of very complex and costly medical care and compensations for victims. The largest burden for our society in material terms however is the costs for removal activities in buildings, roads, ships, defense and agricultural sectors, etc. Studies estimate a total cost of 32 billion EURO for the Netherlands.

It is cynical, but true, to note the fact that the costs of medical care add up to only 1.5 billion EUR of that total amount, because of the short time span from diagnosis to death...

In 2018 the peak in asbestos related deaths is expected to occur in the Netherlands. The enormous financial, societal and human costs that my country has to pay now, and well into the future, has a direct link with the responsibilities that have been neglected for too long in the past. In the Netherlands it was known in 1965 that asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer was associated with asbestos. Studies calculated that if asbestos would have been banned from 1965, 34.000 victims and 20 billion EUROS would have been saved for the Dutch society.

Therefore I am very happy that today I am part of this important meeting at which the position of asbestos in Kazakhstan is being discussed. I truly hope this meeting today can add to the Kazakh discourse on this important topic, and I wish to express my sincerest hope that today may contribute to the health of the Kazakh people.

Also, having the large part of my country in mind, may I underline the importance of informed decision making with regard to international trade in chemicals. I hope that today will prove to bring us a step closer to the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention, helping countries in their efforts to reduce costs and victims through informed choices.

Thank you for your attention.

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