



**WECF | Women in Europe for a Common Future**

**Announcement for Press Meeting on asbestos in Parma, Italy**

## **All Asbestos kills, even from the EECCA region**

Parma, Italy, 12 March 2010 - **Asbestos is a main construction material in EECCA region countries, it's causing many deaths and people in these countries are often not aware of the health risks involved, as they are told asbestos is safe. Because it looks the views of these EECCA region governments will influence the outcome of the Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment, which is taking place right now in Parma, WECF has decided to organise a press meeting on Friday morning, March 12.**

WECF as a network of over 100 women and environment organisations in over 40 countries, thinks it's time to speak up for the vulnerable, for children, for women, and in this case, also for the uninformed general public and construction workers in the EECCA region.

To address this issue WECF will organise a press meeting:

***The meeting will take place on Friday morning, March 12, 09.00 am CET at***

***Grand Hotel de la Ville, Bar Colibri,***

***Via Barilla 3***

***43100 Parma***

***Tel: 00 39 05210304***

“ Here at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Parma, we see that some EECCA region countries are still denying that asbestos is a health threat and this is not acceptable”, says Alexandra Caterbow from WECF. **“We want to inform together with our partners from this region on the situation in these countries and the implications of the view of these governments on the outcome of this conference here in Parma”.**

WECF's work is based on the international scientific conclusions of WHO and IARC and the experience of more than 45 countries that have taken measures to eliminate asbestos-related diseases. WECF bought several samples of chrysotile asbestos used in Russia and the EECCA region, and tested them in a certified laboratory, which showed that chrysotile asbestos fibres has the same diameter and length as in the rest of the world, which make them so deadly. Most of workers in the asbestos and construction sector, and the general public, in the EECCA region, do not know how dangerous this material is and use it without any protection, since they were told that "their" asbestos is different and safe.

“ We see children playing on heaps of broken chrysotile asbestos slates, we see schools and playgrounds build with asbestos containing material. Parents do not know that their children risk to develop a deadly disease. The chrysotile asbestos used in the EECCA region is a great health hazard and will lead to many deaths” states Caterbow.

However, there is a severe lack of data on asbestos related diseases in many EECCA countries. No cancer or occupational health registers exist. Many countries do not have national programs to eliminate asbestos related diseases, even though WHO and ILO provide support. We have also visited several laboratories in EECCA countries and came to the conclusion that of those visited, none was correctly equipped to measure asbestos in the air, so as to assess the exposure of workers, residents and school children and the related health effects.

There is no safe limit of exposure to chrysotile asbestos, exposure is proven to be linked to asbestosis, mesothelioma, and cancers of the lung, the larynx and the ovaries. We as a NGO working on women, children and environment are highly concerned, since women and children suffer from asbestos related diseases, too. For instance, wives of asbestos workers are exposed by washing their husbands working-clothes. In the UK 175 cases of asbestos related deaths of teachers – many women – have been proven.

**About WECF**

A healthy Environment for All is the main mission of WECF, Women in Europe for a Common Future. WECF is a network of a hundred women's and environmental organisations in 40 countries. Our network spans Western Europe and the EECCA region (Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia). WECF has three offices: in the Netherlands, Germany and France. WECF mobilises women to find affordable solutions to the environmental health problems in their communities and encourages women in decision making.

Notes for the editor:

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