

Resolution

of the High Level International Expert Conference

“Asbestos: Policies and Practices in Kyrgyzstan and International Chemicals Policy”

20 May 2011, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

With the exemption of the representative of the international alliance of the chrysotile trade unions, participants of the Conference supported this resolution as follows

Introduction

The Kyrgyz Republic, which is at a transitional stage of its development, adheres to international principles of occupational safety and health of its citizens and strives to achieve a high standard of living for them.

Despite the emerging positive trends in the field of occupational safety and health there are still considerable risks from the use of toxic chemicals and substances in industry, agriculture and households. One of the problems affecting the quality of life of citizens and the environment is the use of products containing asbestos.

Asbestos is the most commonly used building material for roofs and slates and for many other products in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan imports chrysotile asbestos and produces asbestos cement products. Asbestos was long considered the material of progress in the EECCA countries.

On the other hand, asbestos is now recognized by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as one of the substances carcinogenic for humans. IARC and the World Health Organisation have concluded that not only amphibole asbestos has a higher carcinogenic potential but also chrysotile asbestos is carcinogenic for human beings. The World Health Organisation has concluded that controlled use of chrysotile asbestos has not proven to be possible and that there is no safe minimum level of exposure.

As the health costs - with some 100,000 death per year globally - and economic cost of asbestos abatement, are very high, and at the same time, asbestos is easy to substitute, more than 50 countries in the world have already decided to phase-out all use of asbestos.

Other countries, which do not intent to ban asbestos, would benefit from the control of import and exports of asbestos into their country, through the listing of asbestos in the Rotterdam Convention.

There is low awareness about asbestos-induced diseases and risks among the general public and authorities. Data on health impacts of asbestos in Kyrgyzstan is extremely limited and cannot provide a complete insight into asbestos-related health and environmental problems.

Recommendations to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic:

1. In preparing the next Conference of the Parties in June 2011, examine the relevance of inclusion of **chrysotile asbestos in Annex 3 of the Rotterdam Convention** to insure that the Kyrgyz government – as one of the early ratifiers – is informed which asbestos containing products are imported so that information about possible exposure of the population is available.
2. Facilitate easy access of population to information and awareness on all aspects of the potential risks of asbestos production and use.
3. Develop a national program for diagnosis, to reduce and eliminate asbestos-induced diseases in collaboration with WHO and ILO as already committed to in the Parma ministerial Declaration of March 2010.
4. Develop a National Cancer Registry for Kyrgyzstan.
5. Ratify ILO Convention № 162.
6. Introduce prevention-oriented comprehensive occupational health and safety programme targeting workers in the enterprises using asbestos and asbestos-containing materials as guided by ILO conventions
7. Ensure **coordinated cooperation** among all parties concerned: ministries, research institutions, civil society organizations and the business sector on reducing risks of asbestos
8. Support feasibility studies for **diversification into non-asbestos production**.