
Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK

Tony Whitston (Chair) Joanne Gordon (Secretary)
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Prime Minister David Cameron
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 1AA

Re: Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, 2013

28 March 2013

Dear Prime Minister,

We represent stakeholders who have been involved in the campaign for asbestos justice in the UK on behalf of asbestos victims, at-risk tradespeople, patients with asbestos illnesses and health and safety organisations. We have first-hand experience of the human consequences of hazardous exposures to asbestos including the contracting of debilitating diseases and premature death. We know that you too have had personal experience of the devastation caused by asbestos, through the asbestos cancer death of Sir Alistair Aird, your godmother's husband. We urge you to join with us and our colleagues from around the world in campaigning to end the deadly pandemic of asbestos diseases.

We are writing to you to request that the UK Government take urgent action regarding attempts by asbestos vested interests to block the listing of chrysotile asbestos on Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention, a United Nations protocol designed to implement a right-to-know policy in regards to the global trade in hazardous chemicals and substances.

For the last six years, the Convention's expert scientific body (the Chemical Review Committee) has repeatedly recommended that chrysotile (white asbestos) should be included on the list of chemicals subject to the right-to-know provisions of the Convention. This action has been blocked by just a handful of countries with asbestos vested interests. The leadership of the asbestos protagonists was formerly in the hands of the Canadian delegation; now that Canada is no longer in the asbestos business, the leadership of this group has passed to Russia.

Russian asbestos lobbyists are mounting an aggressive and protracted campaign to block the recommendation of the Chemical Review Committee and to sabotage the Convention in order to block the listing of chrysotile asbestos, which represents 100% of the global asbestos trade.

We are aware that you have raised the issue of asbestos with the Director-General of the World Health Organization. We request that you instruct UK officials to ensure that every attempt is made to list chrysotile asbestos as a hazardous substance under the Rotterdam Convention at the conference at the end of April 2013.

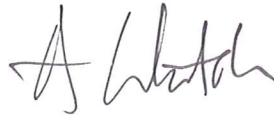
It is unconscionable that the asbestos industry is trying to prevent the basic safety requirements, contained in the Rotterdam Convention, from applying to chrysotile

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Asbestos Action Tayside; Asbestos Support West Midlands; Cheshire Asbestos Victims Support Group; Clydebank Asbestos Group; Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team; Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group; Hampshire Asbestos Support & Awareness Group; Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group; Northern Region Asbestos Support & Campaign Group; Sheffield And Rotherham Asbestos Group

asbestos. This is an international scandal which demands the strongest possible challenge from the UK government, which has witnessed the colossal human tragedy that exposure to all forms of asbestos has caused in our country. People in developing countries, where the asbestos industry is shipping asbestos, deserve to be warned of the hazards of chrysotile asbestos. The Right to Prior Informed Consent, contained in the Rotterdam Convention, is a basic human right. We call on you to take the strongest stand possible to ensure that this basic human right is not denied to developing countries.


Yours sincerely



Tony Whitston
Chair, Asbestos Victims Support Groups' Forum UK



Co-ordinator, International
Ban Asbestos Secretariat



Merseyside Asbestos Victims
Support Group



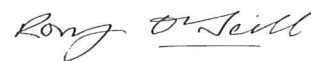
Greater Manchester Asbestos
Victims Support Group



School Asbestos Action



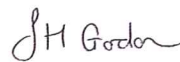
Asbestos Action Tayside



Professor, Occupational and
Environmental Health Research
Group, University of Stirling



Asbestos Support
West Midlands



Derbyshire Asbestos
Support Team



Mick Knighton Mesothelioma
Research Fund



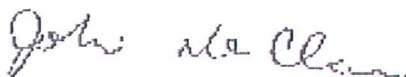
Cheshire Asbestos
Victims Support Group



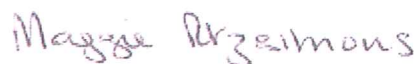
South Yorkshire Asbestos Victims
Support Group



Hampshire Asbestos Support &
Awareness Group



Northern Region Asbestos
Support & Campaign Group



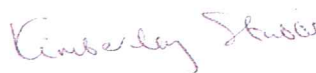
John McClean GMB National
Health & Safety Officer



Hazards Campaign



Mesothelioma UK



June Hancock Mesothelioma
Research Fund

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