

Draft resolution on asbestos submitted by the Secretariat at IndustriALL Global Union's Executive Committee meeting in Geneva on 27-28 April 2017

Escalating the campaign against asbestos

On April 28, the International Day to Commemorate Dead and Injured Workers, meeting in Geneva at the same time as the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, in defence of the health and safety of 50 million workers in 140 countries.

Considering that:

- Asbestos is the world's worst industrial killer. The human right to safe work and the dignity of labour can never be achieved where asbestos use continues;
- At least 107,000 workers die every year from diseases caused by exposure to asbestos;
- All forms of asbestos, including chrysotile, are classified as known human carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and by the International Programme for Chemical Safety, and recognized as such by the international scientific community;
- All asbestos currently produced is chrysotile, almost all of which is used for asbestos cement materials;
- A comprehensive ban on the manufacture and use of asbestos and asbestos-containing products already exists in more than fifty countries; and that furthermore these countries now only permit the handling of in-situ asbestos during asbestos removal, demolition, renovation and maintenance work carried out under strictly controlled working conditions;
- The most pressing concern is asbestos in the developing world where there is increasing consumption of chrysotile and weak regulatory and protection systems.

Therefore, let it be resolved that all IndustriALL affiliates call upon their governments and social partners in their countries to:

- Support the amendment of Article 22 of the Rotterdam Convention, removing the requirement for unanimity to list asbestos for the prior informed consent process¹;
- Take immediate steps to ban all mining, manufacture, recycling and use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials as soon as possible;
- Take immediate steps to develop national action programmes for the elimination of asbestos related diseases following the guidance of the International Labour Office and the World Health Organization, in all countries, whether or not they already have a ban.
- Undertake and support all measures intended to eliminate asbestos and asbestos-containing products from the economic cycle and to replace asbestos with less harmful products;
- Implement comprehensive Just Transition programmes to protect employment of those currently working in asbestos industries through efficient conversion of the industry;

¹ If the vote has not taken place at the time of this discussion.

- Make the protection of workers against asbestos exposure a priority through trade union representation in the building sector and through effective state labour inspection;
- Ratify and implement the provisions of ILO Convention 162 (1986), Safety in the Use of Asbestos, and implement the provisions of its accompanying Recommendation 172 as a minimum standard not to be fallen below;
- Prohibit by law the trans-shipment of asbestos, asbestos containing materials and wastes;
- Ensure proper compensation, medical treatment and support for the victims of asbestos related diseases;
- Carry out an extensive mapping and registration of asbestos in buildings, trains, ships, water pipes with a view to prevention of exposure and the eventual controlled removal;
- Put in place an information, communication and training plan targeted in particular at younger and migrant construction workers, about handling of asbestos;
- Instruct the Secretariat to escalate the campaign in cooperation with other global union partners, including the ITUC and BWI, and civil society.
