

Summary of the main issues arising from the World Asbestos Conference (WAC 2009)

1. Need for a global ban on asbestos: the extraction and processing of asbestos by Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Canada and Zimbabwe produces high risks for workers and for living environments. The highest consumption of asbestos and products containing asbestos occurs largely in Russia and Asian countries. **Taking into account the free circulation of goods, there is a serious danger of unwitting importation of contaminated products containing asbestos in industrialised countries.** In many countries, mainly the most industrialised ones, production is almost entirely exported and the use of asbestos and products containing asbestos in the producing country is kept to a bare minimum. The result of all this is a further **increase in the gap between industrialised and developing countries, above all from the viewpoint of protecting work and living environments.**
2. Need to launch medical screening programmes for those who are currently exposed, or have been exposed in the past, to asbestos: Prevention would greatly reduce the operating costs for the State compared to intervening when the disease is full blown (both in terms of work/production days lost and in terms of healthcare costs). This method of intervening would also have a positive impact on the sick person's life quality.
3. Need for an international permanent discussion group, managed by ONU or ILO or WHO, involving representatives of different countries from the Ministries of Labour, Health, Social Policies, Environment, Productive Activities, Research Institutes, Occupational Insurance Institutes, Asbestos Victim Associations etc, with the following primary aims:
 - Homogenizing laws.
 - International standardisation of analytical methods and threshold values.
 - Establishment of a World Asbestos Conference each 3 years, travelling in the world, to compare and harmonise international data on medical, epidemiological, analytical, mapping, remediation, waste management, legal aspects and compensations related to asbestos use.Each country will designate 2 or 3 persons representing institutions abovementioned.
4. **Need to localise and authorise in each country (in particular in Europe, Japan, Korea etc.) the requirement of sites for asbestos landfills.**

The probable future closure of borders to dangerous wastes transfers (which has already been out into practice by some countries in Europe: Austria, Switzerland, etc.), could create a crisis in the management of asbestos waste.
5. **Need for economic resources for the remediation of Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) and for the remediation of asbestos contaminated sites from human activities.**

The first case (outcrops of contaminated rocks) concerns the global emergency facing the industrialised countries, today and in the future. Funds are needed to address the control and the remediation of natural deposits of asbestos (NOA), since there is often no party directly responsible for NOA that can be thereby charged for the reclamation work, which is designed to reduce and avoid the exposures to unwitting citizens. Also, international scientific collaboration can assist the efforts of regulatory agencies tasked to develop consistent criteria for classifying and identifying "NOA", because the commercial and regulatory definitions of "asbestos" do not always apply well to the natural occurrences. The second case is much

more encompassing, and requires funds necessary to identify the parties responsible for contamination and challenge the failure of guilty companies.

6. Need for a research, development, and refinement of analytical methods and nomenclature in order to extend the list of minerals recognised as asbestos: there are other minerals with the same degree of risk. The aim is to be able to classify as contaminated areas also zones which have these asbestos-forming minerals and start the due reclamation and environmental restoration works.
7. Need of a standardization of testing and analytical methodologies about:
 - a. Risk assessments;
 - b. Personal living non work environments;
 - c. Working outdoor environments;
 - d. Asbestos content in water, soils and sediments;in order to define when to intervene with reclamation work.
8. Need to standardise a method of sampling and analysis for waste material from processes to neutralise waste containing asbestos. The risk is that, in the absence of an analytical procedure, products (glass, tiles, aggregates, etc.) may be reissued to the market when they are not completely free of asbestos (fibre relic).
9. Need to establish international rules for asbestos ship remediations.
10. Need to establish international rules for asbestos remediations in military areas.