

Global Asbestos Congress, Osasco, 17-20 September 2000

Statement of Trade Unions on Banning Asbestos Worldwide

The trade unions attending the Global Asbestos Congress restate their commitment to a global ban on the mining, manufacture, marketing and use of all forms of asbestos and related products.

It is a fact that:

- Asbestos is a carcinogenic substance in any form;
- Asbestos is a public health and environmental threat;
- Technically, the most effective control of carcinogenic substances is their replacement with other less harmful alternatives.

In view of the complex social and economic issues that surround the process of production and use of asbestos throughout the world, the trade unions propose that the following measures be undertaken by trade unions:

- **Asbestos ban:** Trade unions should lobby their national governments to introduce a ban on asbestos, as part of an international initiative to ban asbestos throughout the world.
- **Protection of workers:** Trade unions should lobby their governments to ratify, effectively apply and enforce ILO Convention 162 as a minimum standard to protect workers who may be exposed to asbestos through their work. Trade unions should ensure that the best protection methods to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres is available to workers who have to remove asbestos.
- **Awareness raising:** Trade unions should develop and maintain a broad-based international campaign to educate workers, the union movement and the public about the risks of exposure to asbestos fibre and the measures to be taken to prevent ill-health and to secure a global ban on asbestos;
- **Alternatives:** Trade unions should seek the replacement of asbestos with alternative substances that are less harmful to human health and the environment. Research should be promoted into technology to develop alternative substances to asbestos where that technology does not currently exist.
- **Information exchange:** Trade unions in countries that manufacture and use asbestos substitutes should distribute technical information on the substitutes to sister unions in countries where those substitutes are not currently manufactured and used.
- **Just Transition:** Where workers may be displaced because of the introduction of an asbestos ban, trade unions should lobby for a Just Transition to protect the income, employment and welfare of those affected and their communities.
- **Legal action:** Trade unions should seek through their legal systems to bring to justice those employers whose negligence has caused asbestos diseases and environmental damage to the community. The polluter must pay the remediation costs of any environmental damage done by their operations.
- **Compensation:** Trade unions should seek appropriate and prompt compensation for workers who suffer from asbestos related diseases.
- **Treatment:** Trade unions should campaign to ensure that the victims of asbestos related disease will have access to appropriate medical treatment, support services and information.

Signed on behalf of the trade union group attending the Global Asbestos Congress 2000.

Edison Luiz Bernardes, CONTICON/CUT, Brazil.

Wellington Carneiro, IFBWW Latin American Regional Office, Panama.

Fiona Murie, IFBWW, Central Office, Switzerland.

José Elias de Góis, CISSOR, Brazil.

José Augusto da Silva Filho, FENATEST/CNTC, Brazil.

Nick De Carlo, CAW, Canadá.

Rory O'Neill, IFJ, UK.

Nigel Bryson, TUC, UK.

Bruno Pesce, CGIL, Italy.