

North American Declaration for the elimination of asbestos - related diseases

Whereas asbestos is a known human carcinogen and has been classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a Group 1 human carcinogen;

Whereas asbestos is deemed toxic under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* and the *US Toxic Substances Control Act*;

Whereas inhalation of airborne asbestos fibers of all types can cause cancer such as mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other health problems;

Whereas no safe minimum level of exposure has been identified for any type of asbestos;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases can take 10 to 50 years to present themselves;

Whereas the usual expected survival time for those diagnosed with mesothelioma is between 6 and 24 months;

Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 125 million people in the world are exposed to asbestos at the workplace and 107,000 workers die annually from asbestos exposure;

Whereas these deaths involve enormous human suffering, especially in the case of mesothelioma, made worse because little is known about late stage treatment of these diseases;

Whereas many victims suffering from asbestos related diseases have never received compensation and millions are spent on compensation claims for others;

Whereas workers' family and community members are also at risk of disease from asbestos fibers brought into their homes or otherwise released into the environment;

Whereas asbestos remains a serious hazard in North America where it was used extensively for insulation and as a fire retardant in the construction of many office buildings and public facilities such as schools and hospitals built up until the 1990s;

Whereas an estimated 35 million American homes and businesses are insulated with asbestos-tainted vermiculite;

Whereas the United States and Canada have not prohibited the use of asbestos in the production of domestic products;

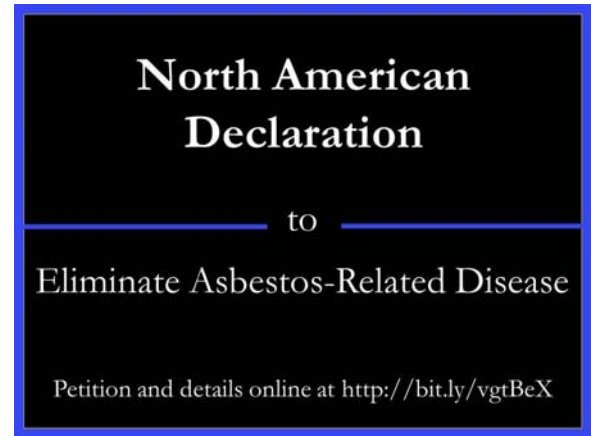
Whereas Canada continues to allow the production and export of asbestos;

Whereas in 2010 the United States imported 90% of its chrysotile asbestos from Canada;

Whereas in 2010 Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Brazil, and Canada were the biggest asbestos producers and exporters in the world;

Whereas the majority of asbestos is exported to developing countries, which may not have the legislative or policy framework in place to practice safe use, handling and disposal of asbestos;

Acknowledging that five of the six known forms of asbestos with the exception of chrysotile asbestos are listed in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade;



Acknowledging that the Rotterdam Convention provides mechanisms for Parties to exchange information on toxic substances and seek prior informed consent from importing states before exports of toxic substances are permitted;

Whereas in 2011, there was still a lack of agreement by a handful of countries, including Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Viet Nam and Canada, to add chrysotile asbestos to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention and whereas this failure will deprive workers and consumers in importing states, particularly for developing countries of information on health and safety protections and on proper handling for others who use products containing asbestos; and

Whereas the Province of Quebec in Canada has imminent plans to reopen and expand their asbestos mining operations.

Therefore be it urgently resolved, that Prime Minister Stephen Harper for Canada and President Barack Obama for the United States, immediately endorse a plan of action for North America for the elimination and prevention of asbestos-related diseases by:

- stopping the North American production and use of all types of asbestos;
- ending the North American export of asbestos to the developing world;
- replacing asbestos use with safe substitutes;
- developing economic and technological mechanisms to stimulate the swift replacement of asbestos and its use in products throughout North America and the developing world;
- supporting asbestos producing communities and workers in just transition to sustainable alternative industries;
- taking measures to prevent exposure to asbestos still in place and during asbestos removal and disposal;
- supporting and improving early diagnosis, treatment, social and medical rehabilitation of asbestos victims;
- establishing North American registries of exposure locations and of people with past and/or current exposures to asbestos; and
- calling upon United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the UN to promote a global declaration embracing these same goals.