

12 May, 2015

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) / Rotterdam Convention Alliance (ROCA)
Intervention on Asbestos

Given by Alexandra Caterbow, WECF and ROCA

Mme President, thank you for giving us the floor, I speak on behalf of WECF as a member of the Rotterdam Convention Alliance.

Distinguished delegates, the objective of the Rotterdam Convention is to protect health and the environment.

Instead we are witnessing blocking of chrysotile asbestos for the fifth time, to protect industry interests instead of protecting health and environment. We see a very active industry here, but we also recognize that this industry is a dying one. So many countries are thinking about banning chrysotile asbestos now, since without listing, the Rotterdam Convention does not allow them to access their right of prior informed consent and to protect their borders.

The listing was not supported because there is a problem of science, nor a problem of meeting the criteria of the convention, but a problem of lack of political will.

We see that there are countries, that are quite new Parties to the Convention, who are using their status to block the Convention - this is shameful. Some of the blocking countries committed at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Italy to eliminate all asbestos-related diseases and now they want to prevent other countries to access their right on prior informed consent.

Those opposing the listing of chrysotile asbestos state that listing would cause extra costs. This argument is wrong, as it omits the enormous health and economic costs caused by chrysotile asbestos, which is already up in the hundreds of billions of dollars. While industry takes the profits, the cost is put on the shoulders of the public taxpayer and the hundreds of thousands sick victims.

We strongly urge Parties to continue efforts towards listing of chrysotile asbestos, including inter-sessional work and in cooperation with civil society.

I would like to invite you to our side event in room 3 during lunch time today. And I would like to introduce you now to Mr. Sharad Vittnal Sawant, a chrysotile asbestos victim from India. He came here to speak to you all, because you are the ones who can make a huge difference this week.

Thank you.