



Statement by Alexandra Caterbow, for ROCA

Thank you Madam President for giving me the floor and for your excellent leadership. We also would like to congratulate India for their brave and encouraging decision to support the listing of chrysotile asbestos. The reconsideration of the Indian policy shows that it is not only possible to change position, but that by doing so a country might also increase its economic wealth.

We support WHO efforts to assist countries in collecting nationally based information on asbestos threat. We hope that at the next COP there will be no more countries claiming for additional information about deadly consequences of asbestos exposure.

To develop safer asbestos-free alternatives is crucial for countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. They need to do so not only for the health of their citizens but also to protect their economy - financially speaking, asbestos is a dying industry. What we have seen in Geneva this week are the last moves of a dying industry.

For Canada the situation is dramatically different. As a developed country which no longer uses asbestos at home, Canada's stance at COP5 was, without doubt, politically motivated. Canada has only minor political reasons to oppose the listing, which are ironically very tiny compared to other issues faced by importing countries. So many people will have to suffer from Canada's inability to solve domestic problems. And even Canada's own health ministry has asked for listing, because listing is consistent with controlled use.

We recommend developing countries and economies in transition to require detailed information from their exporters about asbestos health effects as well as how exporters deal with asbestos including asbestos waste domestically. We are sure Canada has a lot of information and will be willing to share it with importing countries.

What will happen, due to the constant opposition to list chrysotile, is that countries will take national measures to protect their borders, if international mechanisms fail. ROCA and civil society organisations around the world support the African and the Arabic Region in its efforts to effectively control their borders, and to consider other ways to do so, for instance by banning asbestos, if a consensus cannot be reached.