

## ICA SUMMARY FOR DECISION-MAKERS

The long discussion (16 years) around the inclusion of the chrysotile fiber (the serpentine form of asbestos) in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention has highlighted important flaws and mismanagements of this international instrument, as the ICA-International Chrysotile Association has repeatedly pointed out.

**In a nutshell, it is detailed below the various reasons why chrysotile asbestos should be kept out of the PIC (Prior Informed Consent) list in order to respect and preserve both the spirit and the letter of the Rotterdam Convention:**

**1. The Rotterdam Convention is not the right international instrument to regulate the international trade of natural substances**

Unlike agricultural pesticides, which should be the genuine target of this Convention, naturally occurring substances which are part of the environment, such as chrysotile, should not be considered for listing.

**2. A persistent willingness to refuse listing which deserves attention**

Since COP3 in 2006, the Parties have said NO to listing chrysotile asbestos in Annex III on seven occasions, in as many COPs!

Unless new science-based evidence appears, it is time to stop the clock and make a deep review to avoid another failure of the Rotterdam Convention.

**3. Best information and science at the forefront of the policy**

Physically and chemically, chrysotile is substantially different from amphibole forms of asbestos. Amphiboles like crocidolite or amosite are already listed in Annex III and are banned worldwide.

Chrysotile is not used anymore in spray applications. Its current usage is at 93% in cement applications: thus, embedded in a solid matrix, it can be used safely based on today's practices, as defined by the safe and responsible use programs implemented worldwide.

Sound science and update information must drive policy-making thus enlightening the Parties before taking a decision on listing a substance in the PIC list: why is it that neither the COP nor its subsidiary body, the Chemical Review Committee, have raised this issue along the sixteen years that have elapsed since 2005, when chrysotile was for the first time in the agenda for listing?

#### **4. Actually, the COP has acknowledged the need for a review of the chrysotile file**

In June 2011, COP5 tabled a draft decision on *"Follow up action by the Chemical Review Committee on the listing of chrysotile asbestos in Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention"* recognizing the concerns by Parties about the scope of information available and the need of additional information. This draft decision invited Parties and stakeholders to provide such information, requested the Secretariat to compile it and instructed the Chemical Review Committee to review and report back to Parties.

#### **5. Stop the clumsy maneuvers**

Indeed, COP5 in 2011 recognized that a review was necessary under the condition of the previous listing of chrysotile. Logic suggests that this review shall happen before the listing, in full transparency and fairness, with the aim of helping the Parties to take informed decisions.

#### **6. Listing is the waiting room for a worldwide ban**

The wording of Annex II is self-explanatory: *"Criteria for listing banned or severely restricted chemicals"*. Words are what they are and moves to ban by stealth must end. All countries willing to list chrysotile have already banned its use nationally, while those opposing its listing are using it under programs of responsible and controlled use.

#### **7. International trading of chrysotile will not be manageable if it is listed**

Experience and facts show how a listing gradually leads to the end of trading and a worldwide ban (bureaucracy, bad quality of documents, red tape, insurances, poor awareness and lack of a proper information system). The Secretariat and anti-asbestos lobbies do not tell the truth when they affirm that listing does not entail a ban.

#### **8. Chrysotile helps the most vulnerable and the fight against climate change**

Used mainly in roofing and pipes, the chrysotile-cement products made with the serpentine fiber are affordable, durable, climate resilient and sustainable. Hence, they contribute to dwelling adaptability to climate change without any unreasonable or unmanageable risks.

#### **9. Supported by UN international agencies**

The World Health Assembly and the International Labour Organization consider the safe use of chrysotile by adopting a differentiated approach towards the various asbestos fibres and by provisions of ILO Convention 162 *Safety in the use of asbestos*. By only listing amphiboles in Annex III, the Rotterdam Convention consistently acknowledges this principle.

#### **10. Only Parties decide on listings, and only by consensus**

Subsidiary bodies like the Chemical Review Committee or the Secretariat, or anti-asbestos lobbies have no voice in listing decisions.

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