

WORLD CALL OF CONSCIENCE TO PRIME MINISTER HARPER TO STOP OBSTRUCTING THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION

To Prime Minister Harper:

September 10 marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the *U.N. Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade*. Canada ratified this Convention in 2002.

Instead of being a day of pride for Canadians, September 10 is a day of shame because of Canada's continued sabotage of the Convention.

We urgently call on you and your government to stop blocking the Rotterdam Convention and allow it to do its important work of protecting human lives.

As you know, the Convention gives countries a legally binding right to be informed about, and to refuse, hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

The right to prior informed consent is a right that is recognized and enforced in Canada. And it is a right that Canada promised to uphold globally when it ratified the Rotterdam Convention in 2002.

This basic right is crucial to protect people and the environment from harm, especially people in poor countries where increasingly these toxic substances are being shipped. The Convention is about environmental justice. It is based on respect for the right of countries to control their own borders with regard to the import of hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

With deep dismay we note the destructive role that Canada has played in vetoing the recommendation of the Convention's expert scientific body to put chrysotile asbestos on the list of hazardous chemicals, even though chrysotile asbestos meets every scientific and legal requirement of the Convention and has been banned by over forty countries.

If such a clearly hazardous chemical cannot be listed under the Convention, what can?

Canada's obstruction, which had the support of five other countries (Kyrgyzstan, Iran, India, Ukraine and Peru) out of the more than one hundred nations that have ratified the Convention, has forced the Convention Secretariat to circulate options for dismantling the Convention and creating a double standard with a Canada asbestos exemption.

If a double standard system of exemptions is created, the global right to know about hazardous chemicals and pesticides will be destroyed and Canada will have played the lead role in its death.

This is not in keeping with the values Canada claims to uphold in the world. This would be an ugly smear on Canada's reputation.

In six weeks' time, at the upcoming Rotterdam Convention meeting in Rome, the recommendation by the expert scientific body to put chrysotile asbestos on the Convention's list of hazardous chemicals will once more be put forward.

If, once more, Canada blocks it, the Convention will have to be dismantled.

At this critical moment, we call on you, as Prime Minister of Canada, to show responsible leadership and end Canada's obstruction of the Convention.

We call on you to uphold Canada's legal and moral commitment to the global right to be informed about hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

SIGNED:

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- Jimm Simon, National President, Canadian Cancer Society
- Barb Whyllie, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Cancer Society
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