

[Peru may be close to banning asbestos](#)

Kathleen Ruff, RightOnCanada.ca, **April 3, 2013**

On April 1, the Minister of Health of Peru, Midori de Habich, signed a bill to ban asbestos and submitted it to President Ollanta Humala Tasso. The bill states that governments have a responsibility to protect the health and environment of citizens and refers to the scientific evidence of harm caused by all forms of asbestos. The bill forbids the import of chrysotile asbestos after 180 days from the passage of the bill and forbids the use of chrysotile asbestos after 360 days.

“Today we are so close to banning asbestos in Peru,” rejoiced Zully Arlene Pinchi Ramirez, leader of a civil society organisation, [Solidarios ABC](#), which has been working with the Peruvian Health Ministry for three years to achieve a ban on asbestos.

Below is a letter that health defenders have sent to the President of Peru, urging him to approve the bill and to resist the lobbying efforts of the asbestos industry, who will do their utmost to defeat the bill, in order to protect their profits, rather than the health of the people of Peru.

How the asbestos industry has for years blocked a ban on asbestos in Peru

For more than a decade, the Canadian, Mexican, Colombian and global asbestos lobby has succeeded in blocking efforts of health defenders in Peru to ban asbestos.

In 2000, Chile was the first country in Latin America that led the way in banning asbestos. The Canadian asbestos lobby and its political ally, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, did all they could to interfere in Chile and block the ban, but did not succeed.

The asbestos lobby feared that Peru would follow Chile in wanting to ban asbestos; they were determined to prevent this.

“Peru is the country that should have followed the domino effect started in Chile,” states Luis Cejudo Alva, president of the Mexican asbestos lobby organisation, Instituto Mexicano de Fibro Industrias (Mexican Institute of Fibre Industries), in his report [CHRYBOTILE IN LATIN AMERICA – PERCEPTIONS AND FACTS](#). The efforts of those trying to get a ban passed in Peru would have been successful, states Alva, had it not been for the quick actions and active participation of the Canadian Chrysotile Institute (which had a lot of money, supplied by the Canadian government) and the International Chrysotile Association to prevent a ban.

Alva states that his own Mexican organisation, as well as Ascofilbras, the asbestos lobby organisation in Colombia, also intervened in Peru to prevent a ban on asbestos. The two organisations made several trips to Peru to lobby the Health Ministry and the Peruvian Congress. “So far, we have been able to stop in its tracks all actions started,” boasted Alva. “But as we are aware that these attacks will not stop, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico have joined forces and are financing and driving actions through the recently formed Peruvian Chrysotile Association, so as to prevent whatever actions are taken.”

Finally, it seems that the asbestos lobby is facing defeat in Peru and that health defenders are about to achieve a ban on asbestos.

It cannot happen quickly enough. In the letter below, health advocates around the world urge the President to move speedily to approve the Bill and make it law.

Letter to President of Peru from health defenders

April 1, 2013

Ollanta Humala Tasso

Presidente de la Republica

Lima, Peru

Dear President Ollanta Humala Tasso:

We applaud the government of Peru for its initiative to protect the health of the population of Peru by introducing a Bill to ban the use of asbestos. We encourage you and your government to move ahead to implement the Bill.

Since 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended an end to the use of any asbestos as being the most effective way to end epidemics of asbestos-related diseases. The world's scientific and medical experts overwhelmingly state that all forms of asbestos cause mesothelioma, lung and other cancers and asbestosis.

The Union for the International Control of Cancer, comprising more than 700 member organisations in 155 countries, including Peru, as well as the World Federation of Public Health Associations, the International Commission on Occupational Health, the International Social Security Association and the International Trade Union Confederation – representing 175 million workers in 151 countries – have all called for a global ban on the use of all forms of asbestos, particularly chrysotile asbestos. Over the past century, 95% of all asbestos used was chrysotile asbestos. For the past twenty years, chrysotile asbestos represents 100% of the global asbestos trade.

In every country, where asbestos has been used, it has created not only a human but also an economic disaster, adding billions of dollars in health care costs, compensation and to repair buildings in which asbestos-containing materials have deteriorated. For this reason, fifty-four countries have now banned the use of all forms of asbestos.

A recent [Position Statement on Asbestos](#), published by the Joint Policy Committee of Societies of Epidemiology (JPC-SE), endorsed by numerous scientific organisations and scientists around the world, calls for a global ban on the mining, use and export of all forms of asbestos. The summary of the Statement is available in [Spanish](#).

In this Statement, the epidemiologists strongly condemn the dangerous misinformation that the asbestos industry and its lobby organisations, such as the Chrysotile Institute of Peru, are disseminating.

We urge you to listen to reputable scientific organisations, such as those listed above, who are dedicated to protecting public health and have called for all use of asbestos to stop. We ask that you

listen to dedicated civil society organisations that protect health, such as Solidarios ABC in Peru, who have asked your government to move forward and implement the bill to ban asbestos.

We understand that the asbestos lobby is trying to block your government's initiative to ban asbestos. We urge you to put the health of your citizens ahead of the self-interest of the asbestos lobby, which is seeking to protect its financial profits.

We would be happy to provide you with additional information and we would be happy to meet with officials of your government, in person or through a Skype conference call, if that would be helpful.

Respectfully,

[indicia signature by Dr. Weiss]

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