

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JULY 24, 2012

## National and International Epidemiology Organisations Launch Call for a Global Ban on Asbestos

In a Statement released today, [national and international organisations](#) that study the causes and prevention of disease epidemics, call, for the first time, for a global ban on the mining, use, and export of all forms of asbestos. The Statement has already been endorsed by over 150 [public health, civil society organizations](#) and [individual scientists](#) from twenty countries.

“Continued use of asbestos will lead to a public health disaster of asbestos-related illness and premature death for decades to come, repeating the epidemic we are witnessing today in industrialised countries that used asbestos in the past,” stated Dr. Stanley Weiss, chair of the [Joint Policy Committee of the Societies of Epidemiology](#) (JPC-SE), which released the [Statement](#) today. The JPC-SE comprises a number of Canadian, U.S. and international epidemiology organisations.

“We call specifically on the major asbestos exporting countries – Brazil, Canada, Kazakhstan, and Russia – to respect the right to health by ceasing the mining, use, and export of asbestos, and providing transition assistance to their asbestos-mining communities,” said Dr. Robert Hiatt, representing the American College of Epidemiology.

“The asbestos industry continues today to undermine public health policy by denying the overwhelming scientific evidence and promoting asbestos use in developing countries,” said Professor Colin Soskolne, PhD, past-president of the Canadian Society of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. “According to the WHO, over a hundred thousand people around the world die unnecessary and painful deaths every year as a result.”

“With irrefutable scientific evidence of harm to human health resulting from exposure to all forms of asbestos, we considered it to be of critical importance to take a clear position in support of the objective scientific evidence that all use of asbestos should stop,” said Dr. Weiss. The 25-page Statement, which details the latest scientific research, expresses “grave concern that the governments of Brazil, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam are recklessly putting their own and other citizens in peril by allowing asbestos mining and trading to take place.”

The Statement urges countries to inform their citizens of the hazards of asbestos and to establish an inventory of asbestos already in place, particularly in schools where children are at risk of exposure.

The Statement notes that the asbestos industry has used tactics of intimidation to try to silence scientists. It urges public health organisations to support the right of scientists and academics to carry out their work in the public interest free from intimidation.

= 30 =

**CONTACTS:**

Dr. Stanley H. Weiss, MD: 1 973-972-7716; [JPCSE.Chair@gmail.com](mailto:JPCSE.Chair@gmail.com)

Professor Colin L. Soskolne, PhD: 1 780-492-6013; [colin.soskolne@ualberta.ca](mailto:colin.soskolne@ualberta.ca)

Dr. Robert A. Hiatt, MD, PhD: 1 415-514-8113; [rhiatt@cc.ucsf.edu](mailto:rhiatt@cc.ucsf.edu)

Kathleen Ruff: 1 250-847-1848; [kruff@bulkley.net](mailto:kruff@bulkley.net)