

Going Forward: Consolidation and Closing Session

Moderator: Sanjiv Pandita

Having been circulated amongst the conference delegates previously, the draft *Hong Kong Declaration Towards a Complete Ban on all forms of Asbestos* (Appendix A) was tabled by Elizabeth Tang [107] who read out the text and incorporated revisions suggested from the floor. The declaration, having highlighted the growing use of asbestos in Asia, industry's aggressive marketing techniques and the threat to occupational and public health, made a series of recommendations amongst which were:

- an immediate and comprehensive ban on all forms of asbestos and processes that involve asbestos including mining, manufacturing or any other activity;
- the implementation of policies which encourage a just transition to safer technologies;
- setting up administrative protocols and diagnostic infrastructures which recognize the injuries sustained by victims and providing financial and medical assistance;
- holding companies involved in the export of asbestos production to newly industrializing countries criminally liable in the country of origin and country of operation;
- the engagement by international agencies, regional bodies and national governments with Asian asbestos victims' groups and the implementation of joint initiatives to tackle harmful asbestos legacies.

Once the text was finalized and adopted by unanimous consent, it fell to Dr. Domyung Paek and Sugio Furuya to announce the launch of the Asian-Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN). This news was greeted with a standing ovation by conference participants. The next item on the agenda was the announcement of the winning submissions for IBAS 2009 Grass-roots Bursaries; the successful projects were:

- from The People's Training and Research Center, Baroda, Gujarat, India – to locate potential asbestos claimants, file compensation claims, identify medical contacts and local facilities, map polluted worksites and/or environmental contamination.
- from The Mine Labour Protection Campaign, Rajasthan, India – to address asbestos problems in the Udaipur district where a large number of tremolite mines and associated industries have created widespread contamination.
- from the Workers-Community against Asbestos-Related Industry – an outreach initiative proposed by the Occupational

Safety and Health Group of the Sedane Labor Resource Center, Indonesia which will track asbestos usage, raise public awareness of the asbestos hazard and empower affected workers and communities to contribute to the national asbestos debate.

The Henri Pezerat Memorial Award 2009 was presented by Dr. Annie Thébaud-Mony to Dr. Domyung Paek in recognition of his research, leadership and commitment. Like Henri, Domyung was, said Dr. Thébaud-Mony, a "Scientist-Activist" who did not let his training and education get in the way of his humanity. Like Henri, Domyung had responded to the needs of individuals and communities polluted by asbestos and like Henri he had chosen a difficult road to navigate. Dr. Paek accepted the award on behalf of all BANKO members and pledged to redouble his efforts to work with colleagues to end Asia's asbestos plague.

Bringing the Asian Asbestos Conference 2009 to a close, Apo Leong, of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre, reflected on the information which had been shared during the conference; stories from Japan, China, Korea, Brazil and elsewhere illustrated the tragic reality of the asbestos risk, a reality we ignored at our peril. Despite the steep learning curve faced by many AAC 2009 delegates new to the subject of asbestos, there was a real determination amongst them to turn what they had learned in Hong Kong into action to raise asbestos awareness on the mainland. The speaker congratulated the delegates on the safe delivery of the new organization "A-BAN" and reminded colleagues of the significance of April 28. "Tomorrow," he said "there will be demonstrations in downtown Hong Kong which will mark International Workers Memorial Day. All conference delegates are invited to take part in the events planned to visualize the ongoing asbestos hazard faced daily by so many people in China, Asia and around the world. Let us," he concluded "work together for a better tomorrow."



Closing session platform party