

7.1 CONGRESS DEBATE

A wide-ranging debate ensured that the time allocated for the discussion was heavily over-subscribed. During the conference debate, many delegates had the opportunity to speak from the floor. Daniel Berman demanded that Stephan Schmidheiny, the former owner of the Swiss Eternit group, be called to account for the deaths and disease his company caused; Eternit's factory in Osasco formerly employed many of ABREA's members. Dianna Lyons responded to Fernanda's comment that the USA had still not banned asbestos, promising to write to both US Presidential candidates. Applauding the success of this Congress, a leader of the Osasco branch of the Chemical Workers Trade Union said that similar meetings should be held for other harmful products. Luiz Valente, an engineer from the Secretary of Health in São Paulo, commented on the sale of talc contaminated with amphiboles in Brazil. Fernanda Giannasi highlighted the huge problem of accessing accurate and reliable Brazilian data on asbestos diseases. Investigations by Fernanda, Annie Thébaud-Mony and Lucila Scavone into thirty-three mesothelioma deaths have revealed no useful information on the death certificates. Fernanda asked lawyers to help asbestos victims from developing countries find strategies to sue multinational corporations in their home countries. The same companies caused the same diseases in many countries; asbestos victims in Brazil, Chile, India and elsewhere are entitled to the same consideration and compensation as victims in the developed world.

As the discussion was proceeding, other events were taking place in the auditorium. A computer had been provided in the entrance of the hall so that delegates could record their contact details. An email list of Osasco participants was compiled after the meeting and this list became: The Global Asbestos Congress Virtual Network. The first undertaking of this network was to issue the **Osasco Declaration** which confirmed members' support and participation in global efforts to promote solidarity amongst anti-asbestos campaigners, groups and other organisations and to campaign for a global ban on asbestos. Another declaration had been prepared and signed by the trade unionists at Osasco during their workshop. Simultaneously, a petition was being circulated amongst the audience relating to the exploitation in South Africa of asbestos workers, their families and communities by the British asbestos multinational: Cape plc. This petition demanded that Cape make fair recompense to those injured in South Africa by the company's years of asbestos mining and production. The response to this petition was overwhelming with many extra pages needed to record the signatures of all those who supported the demands.