Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
Chemical Review Committee
First meeting
Geneva, 11–18 February 2005

Report of the Chemical Review Committee on the work of its first meeting

Annex I

Rationale, decision and work plan for chrysotile asbestos

A. Rationale for the recommendation that chrysotile asbestos (CAS No. 12001-29-5) should become subject to the prior informed consent procedure and to establish an intersessional drafting group to prepare a draft decision-guidance document

1. In reviewing the notifications of final regulatory action by the European Community to ban chrysotile asbestos and the notifications by Australia and Chile to severely restrict chrysotile asbestos, together with the supporting documentary information provided by those Parties, the Chemical Review Committee was able to confirm that the regulatory actions had been taken in order to protect human health. The European Community action was based on a risk evaluation made by an independent scientific committee. Its conclusions were that chrysotile asbestos was carcinogenic to humans and that there was no threshold of exposure below which asbestos did not pose carcinogenic risks. The Chilean regulatory action was taken on the basis of a review of the health effects of chrysotile asbestos, the evaluation of occupational exposure and the fact that there were no thresholds for the carcinogenic effect of chrysotile asbestos. The basis of the Australian regulatory action was human health risk assessments, taken at national and state level that focused on the occupational, public health and environmental risks associated with current uses and applications in Australia. It was noted by Australia that chrysotile asbestos was classified as a known carcinogen and human exposure was associated with an excessive risk of asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. Among other references, the notifications from Australia, Chile and the European Community referred to Environmental Health Criterion No. 203 (IPCS 1998).

2. The Committee established that the final regulatory actions had been taken on the basis of risk evaluations and that those evaluations had been based on a review of scientific data. The available documentation demonstrated that the data had been generated in accordance with scientifically recognized methods, and that the data reviews had been performed and documented in accordance with generally recognized scientific principles and procedures. It also showed that the final regulatory actions had been based on chemical-specific risk evaluations taking into account the conditions of exposure within the European Community, Chile and Australia.

3. The Committee concluded that the final regulatory actions provided a sufficiently broad basis to merit including chrysotile asbestos in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention in the industrial chemical category. It noted that those actions by Australia, Chile and the European Community would lead to a significant decrease in the quantities and uses of chrysotile asbestos and the risks for human health in each notifying Party were expected to be significantly reduced.

4. There was no indication that there were any pesticidal uses for chrysotile asbestos. The Committee also took into account that the considerations underlying the final

regulatory actions were not of limited applicability but of broader relevance since the effects on human health arising from exposure to chrysotile would be relevant in any country where it was used. On the basis of information provided to the members of the Chemical Review Committee and other relevant information, the Committee concluded that there was ongoing international trade in chrysotile asbestos.

5. The Committee noted that the final regulatory actions were not based on concerns about intentional misuse of chrysotile asbestos.

6. The Committee at its first meeting concluded that the notifications of final regulatory actions by Australia, Chile and the European Community met the information requirements of Annex I and the criteria set out in Annex II to the Convention. It was recommended that chrysotile asbestos be included in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention as an industrial chemical.