Friday, 13 May 2011

His Excellency Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe
Embassy of Zimbabwe
1608 New Hampshire Avenue
Washington, DC 20009
Fax: 202-483-9326

Dear Mr. President Mugabe:

We, as doctors, engineers, scientists, labour leaders, public health organizations, and organizations representing asbestos victims, are extremely concerned to learn that the government of Zimbabwe is considering financing and reopening the old Shabanie and Mashaba asbestos mines. Asbestos, a known human carcinogen, kills more than 107,000 humans every year.

The World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, and the International Trade Union Confederation – representing 176 million workers in 151 countries – have all called for an end to the use of any form of asbestos and more than 55 countries have banned asbestos.

Your government's announcement echoes recent attempts to reopen the Jeffery asbestos mine in Canada. The only support for this reprehensible and retrogressive action is from those who work for and with the asbestos industry. National and international medical and health authorities and concerned citizens around the world have long stood up in opposition to this mine project, and groups such as ours pledge a relentless commitment to a global ban of asbestos.

The time is now – as you rebuild Zimbabwe - to embrace a policy that protects public health. The Zimbabwean government has the opportunity, the moral responsibility and the duty to end the deadly asbestos legacy. We understand that asbestos is a sensitive political and economic issue and that your government might be tempted by expected profits. But the short and long term effects of pursuing this strategy are simply not worth the cost to humanity, as people will be exposed to this deadly carcinogen and will die as a result.

Global borders are indistinguishable and the world is watching you make history through your local and international decisions. For the sake of humanity, we urge you not to reopen the Shabanie and Mashaba asbestos mines and, instead, to prevent the painful disabilities and deaths of thousands of innocent people around the world.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Lemen, Ph.D.
Assistant Surgeon General, United States Public Health Service (Ret.)
ADAO Science Advisory Co-Chairman
United States

Arthur L. Frank, MD, PhD
Professor of Public Health,
Drexel University School of Public Health, Philadelphia, PA

ADAO Science Advisory Co-Chairman
United States

Linda Reinstein,
President/CEO and Co-Founder, Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)
United States

Fernanda Giannasi
Civil and Health and Safety Engineer
Labour Inspector at the Labour and Employment Superintendence in São Paulo
Manager of the Asbestos Program at the Labour and Employment Ministry
Coordinator of the Virtual-Citizen Ban Asbestos Network for Latin America
Brazil

Dr. JM te Water Naude
Medical Manager and Medical Specialist
Asbestos Relief Trust
South Africa

Ken Takahashi, MD, PhD, MPH
Acting Director of the WHO Collaborating Center for Occupational Health Professor of Environmental Epidemiology IIES,
University of Occupational and Environmental Health Japan President
Asian Association of Occupational Health
Japan

Bruno Pesce
Associazione Famigliari Vittime Amianto (AFEVA)
Italy

Romana Blasotti Pavesi
Associazione Famigliari Vittime Amianto (AFEVA)
Italy

Nicola Pondrano
Associazione Famigliari Vittime Amianto (AFEVA)
Italy

Brad Black, MD
Medical Director, Center for Asbestos Related Disease
United States

Celeste Monforton, DrPH, MPH
Occupational Health & Safety Section
American Public Health Association
United States

Joel Shufro

Executive Director, New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health
United States

Bob Stephenson
Co-coordinator, Northeast Asbestos Support & Awareness Group
United Kingdom

Guadalupe Aguilar Madrid. MD, MSc, PhD
Unidad de Investigación en Salud en el Trabajo
Centro Médico Nacional Siglo XXI
México

Cuauhtémoc A Juárez Pérez. MD, MSc,
Unidad de Investigación en Salud en el Trabajo
Centro Médico Nacional Siglo XXI
México

Luis C. Haro García MD, MSc, PhD
Facultad de Medicina
Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México
México

Kathleen Ruff
Senior Human Rights Adviser, Rideau Institute
Canada

Barry Castleman, ScD
United States

Barbara Rahke
Executive Director, Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health (PhilaPOSH)
United States

Dorothy Wigmore
Occupational Hygienist, MS
Canada

Rick Engler, Director
New Jersey Work Environment Council
United States

Evan Moorhead MP
Member for Waterford
Australia

Patrick J. Eiding
President of the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO
United States

Larry Stoffman
Co-Chair, Canadian Labour Congress Occupational Disease Committee
Canada

Mark E. Garrett
Director, Health & Safety Services
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers & Helpers
United States

Marc Hindry
Professor Université Denis Diderot Paris 7
France

Helen Colbert
President, The Queensland Asbestos Related Disease Support Society Inc,
Australia

Kat Burge
Vice President, Asbestos Victims Association (SA) Inc.
Australia

Anthony Del Plato
Midstate Education & Service Foundation
United States

Mohit Gupta
Co-ordinator, Occupational and Environmental Health Network of India (OEHNI)
India

Joan Lichterman
Health & Safety Director
UPTE-CWA 9119, AFL-CIO
United States

Vicki Hamilton
CEO/Secretary, Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support Inc. (GARDS)
Australia

John Flanagan
Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group (MAVSG)
United Kingdom

Richard Clapp,D.Sc., MPH
Adjunct Professor, Univ. of Massachusetts
United States

Alisa M. Koval, MD, MPH/MHSA

Chief Resident, Occupational & Environmental Medicine
Mount Sinai School of Medicine
United States

Vernon Mogensen, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
Department of History, Philosophy & Political Science
Kingsborough Community College
United States

Nina Hansen
Occupational Health & Safety Director
BC Federation of Labour
Canada

Tracy Ford
Co-Founder, Asbestos-related Research, Education & Advocacy Fund
Canada

Dr. Sadhana Prasad, BSc, MD, FRCP(C), FACP (Geriatrics)
Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine (Geriatrics), McMaster University; Director, Center for Bone Health, Canada
Albert Le Monnier
3rd Vice President, ILWU
Canada

Doug Jones
Co-Producer of "Asbestos: the Silent Killer"
President, Local 480 United Steelworkers
Canada

Heather Kelley
Grand Lodge Representative
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
Canada

Robert Katzko
Founding Director, The Canadian Society of Asbestos Victims
Canada

Dr Fernand Turcotte
Professeur émérite de médecine préventive et santé publique, Faculté de medicine
Université Laval, Québec
Canada

Alice Freund
Industrial Hygienist, Mount Sinai Center for Occupational and Environmental Medicine
United States

Noel Colina
Executive Director, Institute for Occupational Health and Safety Development
Philippines

Margaret Keith, PhD,
Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Windsor
Canada

Hanne R. Mintz
Co-Chair of the Board, Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
United States

James Brophy, PhD
Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Windsor
Canada

Dr. Yv Bonnier Viger
Médecin spécialiste en santé publique et médecine préventive; Directeur du Département de médecine sociale et préventive de l'Université Laval; président de l'Association des médecins spécialistes en santé communautaire du Québec
Canada
Dr. Josette Wier, M.D.
Canada

Dr. Jacques Levasseur, M.D.
Québec, Canada

Deidre vanGerven
Mesothelioma Widow
New Zealand

Rae Aston
Canada