

July 8, 2014

Margaret Chan
Director General, World Health Organization
Geneva

Dear Margaret Chan:

I attach the [Zimbabwe Position Paper on Chrysotile Asbestos](#), which was released by the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mike Bimha, on May 29, 2014 in Harare. I wish to draw to your attention the fact that the Zimbabwe government's official Position Paper on Chrysotile Asbestos misrepresents the position of the World Health Organization (WHO) and claims that the WHO supports controlled use of chrysotile asbestos. The Position Paper states:

It can then be concluded that WHO also underscores the importance of using a differentiated approach when handling asbestos because of the fundamental differences between Chrysotile and the Amphiboles. This is another authoritative voice which embraces the concept of controlled use as opposed to the blanket ban on Chrysotile (*3.2 The World Health Organisation*).

This incorrect information in this official Position Paper is being transmitted to the public via the media. An article published on June 9, 2014 in the *Zimbabwe Herald*, "[Zimbabwe: Let's Revive Shabani, Mashava Mines](#)", states: "The World Health Organisation has not pronounced any dangers associated with it (chrysotile asbestos) if used safely."

It is a serious matter when the name and credibility of the World Health Organization is being misused in order to promote misinformation about the dangers of chrysotile asbestos and to promote its use. This misinformation will contribute to a continuing epidemic of asbestos-related deaths.

I request that the WHO write to Minister Bimha and ask that the government of Zimbabwe's Position Paper be corrected so as to accurately state the position of the WHO, [which calls for an end to any use of asbestos](#). It may be, of course, that Minister Bimha will ignore a request from the WHO and may continue misrepresenting the position of the WHO. It is important, however, that the WHO officially ask that the misrepresentation of the WHO position on asbestos be corrected. Otherwise, this misinformation will grow and gain credibility.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ruff
Director, RightOnCanada.ca