

Workers' group urges Philippines' Environment Secretary Lopez to ignore Russian embassy lobby for delisting deadly asbestos

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MANILA- The country's biggest labor federation the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) urged Environment Secretary Gina Lopez yesterday to reject lobby overtures made by the Russian embassy officials to support efforts of Russian asbestos business when she participates in the deliberation on the listing of toxic Chrysotile asbestos in the Rotterdam Convention of Parties 8 in Geneva next month.

Lopez is Philippines' designated national authority (DNA) in the meeting of parties to be held from April 24 to May 5. The convention is a multilateral treaty to promote shared responsibilities in relation to import/export of hazardous chemicals.

"We urge Secretary Lopez to do the right thing and follow her conscience by actively voting for the listing of Chrysotile in the Prior Informed Consent list. By so doing, she would be helping immensely the global conscience struggle to achieve for victimized workers and their families the justice they long deserve," said Gerard Seno, national executive vice president of ALU-TUCP.

The Russian asbestos lobbyists are mounting an aggressive campaign to block the recommendation of the Chemical review committee and to sabotage the Convention in order to prevent the listing of Chrysotile as it becomes the emerging major supplier of asbestos worldwide after Canada decided to cease its export.

In his [letter to Lopez](#), Seno said the asbestos industry must not be allowed to pervert the UN system and jeopardise lives for their own commercial interests. This is an international scandal which demands the strongest possible challenge from governments who have witnessed the colossal human tragedy that exposure to all forms of asbestos has caused in industrialised countries.

People in developing countries, where the asbestos industry is shipping Chrysotile, deserve to be warned of the hazards. The Right to Prior Informed Consent contained in the Rotterdam Convention is a basic human right, which must be guaranteed, Seno said.

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Associated Labor Unions-TUCP is located at National Labor Center Elliptical Road corner Maharlika

St., UP Village Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1101 Website: www.alu.org.ph. The ALU was founded by 44 dock workers in 1954. It has more than 200 officers and staffs in key areas of the Philippines to serve the multiple needs of the formal and informal working people across various industries in the public and private sector. ALU works with local and global union federations, civil society organizations, academe, UN bodies and select branches of government in improving the lives of the workers and their families.