



**United Nations
Environment Programme**

**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

Distr.: General
28 November 2003

English only

Interim Chemical Review Committee

Fifth session

Geneva, 2 – 6 February 2004

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Review of outcome of the tenth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

Identification of alternatives to chrysotile for review by International Programme on Chemical Safety

Note by the secretariat

1. At its fourth session, the Interim Chemical Review Committee reviewed the draft decision guidance documents for asbestos (including crocidolite, actinolite, anthophyllite, amosite, tremolite and chrysotile asbestos). At that session, the Interim Chemical Review Committee approved the draft decision guidance document and forwarded it, together with the recommendation for inclusion of asbestos in the interim prior informed consent procedure, the rationale from the Interim Chemical Review Committee and the tabular summary of comments on the internal proposal, to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a decision.
2. The Interim Chemical Review Committee also decided at its fourth session to request the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to invite the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) to undertake, as soon as possible, an evaluation of the chrysotile form of asbestos and potential substitutes.
3. At its tenth session, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee invited IPCS to undertake, as soon as possible, an evaluation of chrysotile and its alternatives. The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) advised the Committee that IPCS had conducted an assessment of chrysotile in 1998 and conveyed the willingness of her organization to work on the health assessment of alternatives to chrysotile. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee agreed that the Interim Chemical Review Committee should identify appropriate alternatives for IPCS to review.
4. The decision guidance document for chrysotile indicated that the European Community had identified cellulose fibres, polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) fibres and p-aramid fibres as alternatives, while Chile had identified cellulose fibres as an alternative.
5. The secretariat has contacted Governments inviting them to identify alternatives to chrysotile which they would consider appropriate to use but about which there were potential health concerns. Responses from Governments are reproduced in document UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.5/INF/6.

* UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.5/1.

6. The Interim Chemical Review Committee may wish to review the alternatives identified in the decision guidance document, as well as those identified by Governments, and consider referring a list of suitable alternatives to IPCS for consideration.
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