

2007 Yokohama Declaration

for fair and equal compensation for all asbestos victims and their families

Although most industrialized countries ceased using asbestos many years ago, Japan has only just done so. The human cost of this delay is clearly illustrated by the country's emerging asbestos epidemic.

During the Summer of 2005, it was disclosed that many workers had died of asbestos-related diseases at the former Kanzaki plant of the Kubota Corp (Amagasaki City, Hyogo Prefecture) and that residents who had lived near the plant had also contracted mesothelioma, asbestos cancer. As of now, the number of asbestos-related diseases among workers from the Kanzaki plant is more than 150; in excess of 130 neighborhood mesothelioma cases have also been identified. The fallout from the Kubota Corporation's asbestos exposures in Amagasaki City was just the beginning; more neighborhood asbestos sufferers in other parts of the country are being reported. Victims, families and affected residents, who were never warned about the asbestos hazard, are uniting and working with trade unions, citizens' groups, organizations and individuals to achieve justice for the injured.

There is no excuse for the deadly asbestos exposures which have had such tragic consequences in Japan; the hazards of asbestos were well known before these exposures took place. The on-going Japanese epidemic of ill-health and death was totally avoidable. Similar catastrophes must be prevented elsewhere. Ban Asbestos Network Japan (BANJAN), which is dedicated to campaigning against asbestos, held the 2007 International Asbestos Conference from 23-24 November, 2007 in Yokohama as part of its 20th anniversary events.

We, 380 participants of the conference from 11 countries and regions, agree that;

- Asbestos is not solely an occupational problem; it is an urgent public health issue which needs immediate and coordinated action by international organizations, national governments and civil society.
- Equitable compensation for ALL asbestos victims, including those whose exposures were environmental, and their families should be provided in every country.
- The input of asbestos victims and their relatives must be considered in all discussions on remedial measures, proposed asbestos legislation and compensation procedures.
- To protect humankind, an immediate worldwide ban on asbestos is a top priority.

We declare that we will do our best to obtain the rights listed above for all the asbestos-injured and to work together to achieve an asbestos-free society.

November 24, 2007