



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OUTCOMES REPORT

FOR THE ASBESTOS DIALOGUE

HELD IN BOLIVIA LODGE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

23-24 MARCH 2017

BACKGROUND

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) held National Asbestos Dialogue on 23-24 March 2017. This dialogue aimed to create information exchange platform between and among Natural Science community, consultants, industries and technology inventors/experts, municipalities, government parastatals, NGOs, community leaders, provincial environmental departments, provincial local government and relevant national departments. The objectives of this Dialogue were as follows:

- To create a platform to exchange information on best Asbestos management practices and technologies on contaminated land and various exposure setup.
- Explore integrated approach towards management of Asbestos
- To provide platform technical requirements for investigation of Asbestos contaminated land
- Discussion on sustainable management of Asbestos in the country
- To identify and address bottlenecks with regards to management of Asbestos in the country
- To investigate, assess and exchange the best land remediation practice and recent management technologies on Asbestos.
- Use of Site-Conceptual-Model for investigation of Asbestos Contaminated Land
- Engagements on factors to be considered when formulating remediation objectives on Asbestos.
- To create a platform for the identification of economic opportunities that could be realised from land remediation (Brownfield areas).
- To create a platform to engage representatives of governments and the private sector, in building public-private partnerships to enhance land remediation management.

The theme for the National Asbestos Dialogue was **Promoting Sustainable Management through Collaboration and Innovation**. The Dialogue was held for two days and it was comprise of plenary and two commissions. The first commission was focusing on Government Initiatives while second commissions was dealing with Asbestos Technologies.

Program and action items arose from Dialogue

The first day of Dialogue programme was officially opened by programme Director Mr Obed Baloyi. Trevor Mphahlele welcomed the delegates in the province and after the welcoming, the Acting Chief Director: Hazardous Waste Management and Licensing, Mr Mokoena set the scene. He said, in order to create zero exposure to asbestos in the country; promoting sustainable management of asbestos through

research, development, collaboration and innovations is important. “The inclusive approach is important in managing asbestos. Let’s together come with best practical solutions to address the asbestos problem. Working together we can win.” he said.

Mr Mokoena called for government departments, communities, community leaders, industries, business and NGOs to contribute towards awareness and educational campaigns. He said, in order to ensure sustainability of this campaigns, Long-term Educational and Awareness strategy needs to be developed, to integrate and facilitate efforts from role players in a coordinated fashion. “Inclusivity is important”.

He also mentioned that DEA has developed a National Waste Strategy as a policy for waste management in the country, which intends to increase the life span of disposal facilities and to facilitate the reuse and recycling of waste. The only waste management option available for asbestos is disposal. This consequentially and unintentionally undermines National Waste Management Strategy. The challenge is that there is no known technology available at government’s disposal to promote the recycling or reuse of asbestos, let alone even technologies that ensures the safe disposal of asbestos. “Given this context I therefore challenge the inventors, experts, scientists and researchers to investigate models, strategies, technologies which will assist in ensuring sustainable management of asbestos given the context of the country,” encouraged Mr Mokoena.

After Mr. Mokoena’s address, Mr Matime Mabiletja, a resident and an activist of Mafefe Village in Limpopo Province, where the asbestos problem is rife through buildings, road construction and illegal dumping sites, has appealed for different stakeholders to assist communities facing a similar problem through educational and awareness programmes about the asbestos material.

“I appreciate the role the Department of Environmental Affairs has played and the millions you are putting into protecting our environment. South Africa has been dialoguing for too long. Our communities need radical remediation programmes. DEA cannot continue to carry this load alone. We need other departments and companies to come on board to solve this problem. This is a huge problem, people are dying from the asbestos related diseases,” said Mr Mabiletja.

Dr Mpho Tshitangoni (Director: Land Remediation, DEA), presented on South Africa’s Secondary Asbestos Remediation Plan and the success stories related to this plan. Mr Matjelele Phaladi took the delegates through the Concept Document on the National Asbestos Strategy. The National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) presented a number of studies relating to asbestos in the country. The reports from NIOH included tests that were conducted to identify asbestos materials (fibres), statistics of reported cases of asbestos incidents and the awareness programs that were implemented.

Two commissions were held and facilitated by Mr Phaladi and Dr Tshitangoni respectively. Commission one was responsible for Government initiatives and commission two was Asbestos remediation technologies. In commission one, DENOVO presented a case study on the management of projects in Penge village. The challenges associated with the project and the subsequent measures to ensure that project becomes a success were highlighted in the presentation. Zama Mtembu presented on Best Management Practice on the removal and disposal of Asbestos waste. The challenges facing local municipalities on asbestos were also highlighted in the presentation and specific reference was made to USA Model in disposal of waste.

In commission two, A-thermal presented on chemical stabilization, a technology for treating asbestos. NuCoating Pty Ltd presented on encapsulation technology that ensures that asbestos is managed in a way that it penetrates through the material used on roof sheets and buildings, to prevent them from being loose, as that could lead to the inhalation of asbestos fibres.

On the last day of the dialogue, the programme director provided a synopsis and pointers about the discussions that were held on the preceding day. Ms Elizen Lourens from The Department of Labour (DoL) presented about the amendments which are under way, among other legislations which deals with asbestos management requirements. DEA and other role players are encouraged to provide inputs as soon as the document is available for comments. Lastly, Mr. Takalani Telekisa presented on the Concept Document on National Awareness and Educational Strategy with a great emphasis on encouraging role players to work with DEA and the DoL in an integrated manner, to ensure that awareness and educational efforts impacts are maximised.

The discussions were fruitful, progressive and lead to action items that required to be implemented in quest to ensure sustainable management of asbestos, the action items are as follows:

- The National Asbestos Strategy needs to be developed to integrate implementation of asbestos management efforts.
- A review of the National Norms for Disposal of Waste to landfill to ensure that asbestos waste is disposed off, not only in Class A landfill site but further consider other classes for disposal. This may be costly to the municipality in relation to disposal of asbestos in communities that are directly affected by asbestos, taking into consideration the operational requirements that a licenced landfill site that handle this chemical would need to put applicable measures in place

that would not lead to migration and inhalation of asbestos dust. This is because asbestos is not leaching, but airborne.

- There must be comments on the revised Asbestos Abatement Regulations to ensure that there is an alignment of legislative requirements.
- DEA to engage with South African Bureau of Standard to discuss approval requirements for the technologies for asbestos management

The Asbestos Dialogue was success because the objectives that were set were met.