

Box 1: Background information on asbestos

- Asbestos has been a remarkably useful mineral with a wide range of applications.
- The term “asbestos” includes fibres that differ in physical form and chemical composition.
- Chrysotile is now the most commercially important type of asbestos, because the use of other types has been abandoned over the past 30 years.
- Different asbestos-containing materials have different degrees of likelihood of degradation.
- A wide range of alternative products have been developed in the past 30 years to compete for a market share with asbestos. The market share for these alternatives has increased sharply in Western countries.
- As markets for asbestos have decreased in Western countries, the relative proportion sold to the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America has increased.

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