It is not possible to come to a reliable quantitative assessment of the risk of malignancies for the general public. Present evidence does not point to there being a threshold level of exposure, but there is very likely a practical level of exposure below which it will be impossible to detect any excess mortality or morbidity due to asbestos, despite the presence of this mineral in the tissues, especially in the lung.

Chapter XI presents various existing permissible limits, mainly for occupational exposure. In many countries permissible limits for workroom air are (or will be in the near future) 2 fibres/ml (>5 µm); there is a tendency to lower these levels, particularly for crocidolite (in UK 0.2 f/ml). These levels aim at prevention of early asbestosis, and not of malignancies; small fibres (>5 µm) are taken into account. With regard to the general environment adequate quantitative standards are scarcely available; most are expressed in terms of required control practices. There is no way of extrapolating from occupational permissible limits to environmental permissible limits for ambient air, water, etc.

Chapter XII evaluates the health risk of true environmental exposure. Two approaches are discussed which try to extrapolate from the occupational to the public health risk. However, the approaches appear to be too deficient to allow quantitative extrapolation. Nevertheless, they both indicate that true ambient air exposure of the general public is of an order of two to three magnitudes smaller than in well controlled industry. It seems possible that a factor of 1000 or more may be large enough to reduce the risk of tumors to a negligible level compared to other risks.

The 1972 Conclusions of the Advisory Committee on Asbestos Cancers of the International Agency for Research on Cancer which state that there does not exist evidence of an increased risk of mesothelial tumors in respiratory or gastrointestinal exposure of the general public are not contradicted by the data presented in this report. On the other hand present evidence is not conclusive enough to make a statement in a positive way.

The general conclusions of this chapter can be summarized as follows:

- there exists enough reason to minimize asbestos fibre exposure of the general public as much as possible; this is particularly the case for

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