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ASBESTOS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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December 19, 1978.
Ref. : AIA/EEC/B-9.1.

GRACE INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS, INC.
Rue Marterey, 5
CH - 1005 - LAUSANNE.

To the attention of Mr. A.E. DAMBACH.

Dear Mr. Dambach,

I have been informed by Mr. Schwermer (WVAZ, Germany) that the problem which arose around your labelling initiative is now satisfactorily settled after contacts you had with him and with Mr. Mohr (Switzerland).

In confirmation of the information given to you by Messrs. Schwermer and Mohr, and in order to explain why, at a given moment I got involved in this matter, a few words from my side would, I think, be helpful.

- Some time ago I was asked by the Asbestos International Association, London, to inquire (in my quality of Secretary to the EEC Advisory Council of the A.I.A.), about a request for labelling by a distributor in Europe of asbestos containing goods manufactured in the U.S.A. by Union Carbide Corp.

- The information I got was that the distributor had requested the manufacturer to label, from January 1979 onwards, asbestos goods shipped to the EEC, with the EEC label for harmful substances.

- As asbestos is, however, not (yet) included in the EEC list of (about 700) harmful substances, AIA's EEC Advisory Council (AIA/EAC) was of the opinion that this initiative was inappropriate, the more so as the AIA/EAC is at present preparing an ad hoc international asbestos label.

- I therefore tried to contact the distributor, and, in the belief (based on apparently wrong information) that it was a firm based in Germany, I asked our German AIA/EAC representati Mr. Schwermer, to assist me to help and locate this firm.

- Meanwhile it became clear that the matter had evolved in such a way that it was finally a U.S. firm wanting to use a U.S. label (OSHA) on its asbestos bags, shipped to Switzerland, so that it became a matter fully beyond the competence of AIA's EEC Advisory Council, since it involved neither an EEC label, nor an EEC manufacturer or distributor.

- As, no doubt, Mr. Schwermer and Mr. Mohr will have pointed out to you, most North American fibre producers are, at present, shipping asbestos bags to EEC which contain a warning, but not a label.

- The asbestos label AIA's EAC is now preparing, is intended for being used, as a first step, inside the EEC, but AIA is endeavouring to gain world wide acceptance of this label, so as to make it a truly standardised and international one. The decision on when to start the use of this label is left to each individual country.

- In view of this future use of a standardised asbestos label unanimously approved by the international asbestos industry, AIA feels that the use of any other kind of label on asbestos bags by individual companies should, in the meantime, be avoided. We feel indeed that the generalised use of a truly international label is the only way to avoid the EEC authorities from imposing upon the asbestos industry the use of the EEC "toxic substance" label (i.e. the skull and cross-bones).

I hope this summary clears up AIA's and EAC's views on both your labelling initiative and on labelling in general. In case you would like to ask more information on any specific point in connection with this matter, please feel free to do so. Our secretariat is also at your entire disposal for any EEC matter not concerning labelling.

Yours faithfully,

The Secretary,

H.E. VANHERLE.

cc. Sir Neville STACK, Director General A.I.A., London.