

JOINT TECHNICAL TASK FORCE

The Herald – 28 August 2009

“Harare — Zimbabwe and South Africa yesterday signed a four-year agreement to promote safe labour migration between the two Sadc countries.

The agreement will start with Limpopo Province farm workers. Illegal immigrants are often exploited because of lack of proper documentation, but the scheme is expected to spread across South Africa. In the pilot scheme, South African farmers seeking Zimbabwean workers will give their requirements to a labour centre in Beitbridge, where a database of jobs will be maintained.

The signing ceremony, held at the International Organisation for Migration reception centre in Beitbridge yesterday, came after the two countries' labour ministries held several meetings sating back to January 2006.

Labour and Social Welfare Minister Paurina Mpariwa and South African Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana represented their countries.

The agreement covers labour dispute resolution and social dialogue, labour law reform, social security, employment services, Beitbridge migration centre, joint technical taskforce on occupational health and safety and asbestos, facilitation of the interface between ex-Zimbabwean migrant workers in gold mines of the Republic of South Africa and previous employers or the ex-employing agencies.”

I suspect that the technical task force is nothing more than a stalking horse for a campaign to promote “controlled use of chrysotile asbestos” in South Africa. When it last met in Cape Town in 2007, the Zimbabweans on the task force proposed the establishment of a research programme on chrysotile. At the time the intention was to attack alternative fibres and stall the proposed asbestos ban indefinitely. This time around the purpose of the research programme will to create a platform for the “controlled use” debate and unbanning of chrysotile in South Africa.

Attached are the draft resolutions that emerged from the first two meetings of the Joint Task Force (I am not sure if they were formally adopted).

This could be one of those matters where political and economic interests are seen to trump health and safety concerns. I would imagine the Zimbabweans have suggested strongly that the ban has caused significant economic harm and that unbanning it would contribute to the success of the transitional government.

We need to monitor this closely and ensure that we have representation on whatever forum emerges.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200908280072.html>