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## **PRESS RELEASE**

*Vincennes, le 28 février 2002*

### **A GREAT VICTORY FOR ASBESTOS VICTIMS... AND ALL OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE VICTIMS**

**28 February, 2002: Paris, France**

The Supreme Court decision handed down today has been eagerly awaited. The Judges upheld 30 judgments of inexcusable fault against employers who had exposed workers to asbestos. After 50 years of lies, the companies which manufactured and processed asbestos have finally been brought to justice and asbestos victims have received the judicial recognition and compensation they deserve.

The companies were found liable for occupational diseases which occurred after asbestos exposure. The Court agreed that the employers knew or should have known of the dangers they were exposing their workers to and they should have taken every possible measure to protect their workers' health.

The Supreme Court decisions are a great boost for asbestos victims in France who brought these cases and for thousands more who will need to seek compensation in the future. These decisions give hope to asbestos victims internationally, many of whom face an uphill battle in securing compensation for life-threatening diseases.

These decisions represent great social progress in workers' health protection. Now, more than ever, employers know they have an obligation to ensure occupational health and safety; this obligation is paramount and means that all steps must be taken to avoid disease and accidents. Ignoring this obligation will not be tolerated by the highest judicial forum in France. Today's Supreme Court decision opens the door for many who have suffered occupational disease or injury.