

Cash dividends payable in U.S. dollars on our common stock may be officially transferred from The Netherlands and converted into any other convertible currency.

There are no limitations, either by Dutch law or in our Articles of Association, on the right of non-residents of The Netherlands to hold or vote our common stock.

Taxation

The following summarizes the material Dutch and U.S. tax consequences of an investment in shares of our common stock. This summary does not address every aspect of taxation relevant to a particular investor subject to special treatment under any applicable law, and is not intended to apply in all respects to all categories of investors. In addition, except for the matters discussed under “Netherlands Taxation,” this summary does not consider the effect of other foreign tax laws or any state, local or other tax laws that may apply to an investment in shares of our common stock. This summary assumes that we will conduct our business in the manner described in this annual report. Changes in our organizational structure or the manner in which we conduct our business may invalidate all or parts of this summary. The laws on which this summary is based could change, perhaps with retroactive effect, and any law changes could invalidate all or parts of this summary. We will not update this summary for any law changes after the date of this annual report.

This discussion does not bind either the U.S. or Dutch tax authorities, or the courts of those jurisdictions. Except as noted, we have not sought a ruling nor will we seek a ruling of the U.S. or Dutch tax agencies about matters in this summary. We cannot assure you that such tax agencies will concur with the views in this summary concerning the tax consequences of the purchase, ownership or disposition of our common stock, or that any reviewing judicial body in the United States or The Netherlands would likewise concur.

PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS SHOULD CONSULT THEIR TAX ADVISORS REGARDING THE PARTICULAR TAX CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACQUIRING, OWNING AND DISPOSING OF OUR COMMON SHARES, INCLUDING THE EFFECT OF ANY FOREIGN, STATE OR LOCAL TAXES.

United States Taxation

The following is a summary of the material U.S. federal income tax consequences generally applicable to “U.S. Shareholders” (as defined below) who invest in shares of our common stock and hold the shares as capital assets. For purposes of this summary, “U.S. Shareholders” means: (1) citizens or residents of the United States (as defined for U.S. federal income tax purposes); (2) corporations created or organized in or under the laws of the United States or any of its political subdivisions; (3) estates whose income is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source and (4) trusts if (i) a court in the United States can exercise primary supervision over the administration of the trust and (ii) one or more U.S. persons can control all of the substantial decisions of the trust.

This summary does not comprehensively describe all possible tax issues that could influence a current or prospective U.S. Shareholder’s decision to buy or sell shares of our common stock. In particular, this summary does not discuss: (1) the tax treatment of special classes of U.S. Shareholders, such as financial institutions, life insurance companies, tax exempt organizations, tax-qualified employer plans and other tax-qualified or qualified accounts, investors liable for the alternative minimum tax, dealers in securities, shareholders who hold shares of our common stock as part of a hedge, straddle, or other risk reduction arrangement, or shareholders whose functional currency is not the U.S. dollar; (2) the tax treatment of U.S. Shareholders who own (directly or indirectly by attribution through certain related parties) 10% or more of our voting stock and (3) the application of other U.S. federal taxes, such as the U.S. federal estate tax. The summary is based on the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the “Code”), applicable Treasury regulations, judicial decisions and administrative rulings and practice, all as of the date of this annual report.

Treatment of ADRs. For U.S. federal income tax purposes, a holder of an ADR is considered the owner of the shares of stock represented by the ADR. Accordingly, except as otherwise noted, references in this

summary to ownership of shares of our common stock includes ownership of the shares of our common stock underlying the corresponding ADRs.

Taxation of Distributions. The tax treatment of a distribution on shares of our common stock held by a U.S. Shareholder depends on whether such distribution is from our current or accumulated earnings and profits (as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles). To the extent a distribution is from our current or accumulated earnings and profits, a U.S. Shareholder will include such amount in gross income as a dividend. To the extent a distribution exceeds our current and accumulated earnings and profits, a U.S. Shareholder will treat such amount first as a non-taxable return of capital to the extent of the U.S. Shareholder's tax basis in such shares, and any excess amount will be treated and taxed as a capital gain. See the discussion of "Capital Gains Rates" below. Notwithstanding the foregoing described treatment, we do not intend to maintain calculations of our current and accumulated earnings and profits. Dividends received on shares of our common stock will not qualify for the inter-corporate dividends received deduction.

Distributions to U.S. Shareholders that are treated as dividends may be subject to a reduced rate of tax under recently enacted U.S. tax laws. For tax years beginning after December 31, 2002 and before January 1, 2009, "qualified dividend income" is subject to a maximum tax rate of 15%. "Qualified dividend income" includes dividends received from a "qualified foreign corporation." A "qualified foreign corporation" includes (1) a foreign corporation that is eligible for the benefits of a comprehensive income tax treaty with the U.S. that contains an exchange of information program and (2) a foreign corporation that pays dividends with respect to shares of its stock that are readily tradable on an established securities market in the U.S. We believe that we are, and will continue to be, a "qualified foreign corporation" and that dividends we pay with respect to our shares will qualify as "qualified dividend income." To be eligible for the 15% tax rate, a U.S. Shareholder must hold our shares un-hedged for a minimum holding period (generally, 61 days during the 121-day period beginning on the date that is 60 days before the ex-dividend date of the distribution). Although we believe we presently are, and will continue to be, a "qualified foreign corporation," we cannot guarantee that we will so qualify. For example, we will not constitute a "qualified foreign corporation" if we are classified as a 1) a "passive foreign investment company" (discussed below) in either the taxable year of the distribution or the preceding tax year or 2) a "foreign investment company" or a "foreign personal holding company" (each discussed below) in either the taxable year of the distribution or the preceding tax year, but only for our tax years beginning before January 1, 2005.

Distributions to U.S. Shareholders that are treated as dividends are generally considered income from sources outside the United States and foreign source "passive" income for foreign tax credit purposes. However, if U.S. persons own, directly or indirectly, 50% or more of our shares of common stock, then a portion of the dividends (based on the proportion of our income that is from U.S. sources) may be treated as sourced within the U.S. This 50% ownership rule could potentially limit a U.S. shareholder's ability to use foreign tax credits against the shareholder's U.S. tax liability. In addition, special rules will apply to determine a U.S. Shareholder's foreign tax credit limitation if a dividend distributed with respect to our shares constitutes "qualified dividend income" (as described above). See the discussion of "Credit of Foreign Taxes Withheld" below.

Any amounts of foreign currency we distribute on shares of our common stock generally will equal the fair market value in U.S. dollars of such foreign currency on the date of receipt. A U.S. Shareholder will have a tax basis in the foreign currency equal to its U.S. dollar value on the date of receipt, and will recognize gain or loss when it sells or exchanges the foreign currency. Such gain or loss is taxable as ordinary income or loss from U.S. sources. U.S. Shareholders who are individuals will not recognize gain upon selling or exchanging foreign currency if the gain does not exceed \$200 and the sale or exchange constitutes a "personal transaction" under the Internal Revenue Code. The amount of any property other than money that we distribute with respect to shares of our common stock will equal its fair market value on the date of distribution.

Credit of Foreign Taxes Withheld. Under certain conditions, including a requirement to hold shares of our common stock un-hedged for a certain period, and subject to limitation, a U.S. Shareholder may claim a credit against the U.S. shareholder's federal income tax liability for the foreign tax owed and withheld or paid with respect to taxable dividends on its shares. Alternatively, a U.S. Shareholder may deduct the amount of

withheld foreign taxes, but only for a year for which the U.S. Shareholder elects to deduct all foreign income taxes. Complex rules determine how and when the foreign tax credit applies, and U.S. Shareholders should consult their tax advisors to determine whether and to what extent they may claim foreign tax credits.

Under certain conditions, we may retain a portion of Netherlands taxes we withhold from dividends paid to our shareholders, rather than pay that portion of the withheld taxes to The Netherlands Tax Administration. Uncertainty exists whether a U.S. Shareholder can properly claim as a foreign tax credit any Netherlands withholding taxes we retain. As a result, U.S. Shareholders should consult their tax advisors regarding their ability to do so. If unable to claim a foreign tax credit for those tax amounts, a U.S. shareholder still may deduct them for U.S. federal income tax purposes, but only for a year for which the U.S. Shareholder elects to deduct all foreign income taxes. The conditions under which we could retain Netherlands withholding taxes are unlikely to occur, but upon request, we will inform U.S. Shareholders whether we retained any Dutch tax withheld from distributions on shares of our common stock.

Sale or Other Disposition of Shares. A U.S. Shareholder will recognize capital gain or loss on the sale or other taxable disposition of shares of our common stock, equal to the difference between the U.S. Shareholder's adjusted tax basis in the shares sold or disposed of and the amount realized on the sale or disposition. Individual U.S. Shareholders may benefit from lower marginal tax rates on capital gains recognized on shares sold, depending on the U.S. Shareholder's holding period of the shares. See the discussion of "Capital Gains Rates" below. Capital losses not offset by capital gains are subject to limitations on deductibility. The gain or loss from the sale or other disposition of shares of our common stock generally will be treated as income from sources within the United States for foreign tax credit purposes, unless the U.S. Shareholder is a U.S. citizen residing outside the United States and certain other conditions are met.

Capital Gains Rates. For individual U.S. Shareholders, the tax rates applicable to capital gain and ordinary income may vary substantially. For calendar year 2003, the highest marginal income tax rate that could apply to the ordinary income of an individual U.S. Shareholder (disregarding the effect of limitations on deductions) is 35%. In contrast, for taxable years ending after May 6, 2003, a maximum rate of 15% applies to any net capital gain of an individual U.S. Shareholder recognized on or after May 6, 2003 if such gain is attributable to the sale or exchange of capital assets held more than one year. Gain attributable to the sale or exchange of capital assets held one year or less is short-term capital gain, taxable at the same rates as ordinary income. In addition, a maximum rate of 15% applies to "qualified dividend income" (as described above).

Controlled Foreign Corporation Status. If more than 50% of the voting power of all classes of our stock or the total value of our stock is owned, directly or indirectly, by citizens or residents of the United States, United States domestic partnerships and corporations or estates or trusts other than foreign estates or trusts, each of whom owns 10% or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of our stock entitled to vote or the total value of our stock ("10-Percent Shareholder"), we could be treated as a "controlled foreign corporation" ("CFC") under Subpart F of the Code. This classification would, among other consequences, require 10-Percent Shareholders to include in their gross income, their pro rata share of our "Subpart F income" (as specifically defined by the Code) and our earnings invested in U.S. property (as specifically defined by the Code).

In addition, gain from the sale or exchange of our common shares by a U.S. person who is or was a United States shareholder (as defined in the Code) at any time during the five-year period ending with the sale or exchange is treated as dividend income to the extent of earnings and profits of the company attributable to the stock sold or exchanged. Under certain circumstances, a corporate shareholder that directly owns 10% or more of our voting shares may be entitled to an indirect foreign tax credit for amounts characterized as dividends under the Code.

If we were classified as both a Passive Foreign Investment Company, as described below, and a CFC, generally we would not be treated as a Passive Foreign Investment Company ("PFIC") with respect to 10-Percent Shareholders. We believe that we are not, nor will we become, a CFC.

Passive Foreign Investment Company Status. Special U.S. federal income tax rules apply to U.S. Shareholders owning capital stock of a PFIC. A foreign corporation will be a PFIC for any taxable year

in which 75% or more of its gross income is passive income or in which 50% or more of the average value of its assets are considered “passive assets” (generally assets that generate passive income or assets held for the production of passive income). For these purposes, passive income generally excludes interest, dividends or royalties from related parties.

If we were a PFIC, each U.S. Shareholder would likely face increased tax liabilities (possibly including an interest charge) upon the sale or other disposition of shares of our common stock or upon receipt of “excess distributions,” unless the U.S. Shareholder elects (1) to be taxed currently on its *pro rata* portion of our income, regardless of whether such income was distributed in the form of dividends or otherwise, or (2) to mark its shares to market by accounting for any difference between such shares’ fair market value and adjusted basis at the end of the taxable year by either an inclusion in income or a deduction from income. Because of the manner in which we operate our business, we are not, nor do we expect to become, a PFIC.

Foreign Personal Holding Company Status. For our tax years beginning before January 1, 2005, special U.S. federal income tax rules apply to U.S. Shareholders owning shares of a “foreign personal holding company” (a “FPHC”). A foreign corporation will be a FPHC if (1) at any time during its taxable year, five or fewer individuals who are U.S. citizens or residents own (directly or indirectly by attribution through certain related parties) more than 50% of the corporation’s capital stock (by either voting power or value) (the “Shareholder Test”) and (2) the corporation derives at least 60% of its gross income (reduced to at least 50% after the initial year of qualification under certain circumstances), as adjusted, for the taxable year from certain passive sources (the “Income Test”). We and certain of our subsidiaries meet and will likely continue to meet the Income Test, because most of our income derives from interest or dividends. However, we will fail the Shareholder Test, because U.S. citizens or residents do not own more than 50% of the shares of our common stock. Therefore, neither we nor any of our subsidiaries are a FPHC for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

If we or any of our subsidiaries were a FPHC, U.S. Shareholders (including certain indirect holders) would be required to include in gross income, as a dividend, their *pro rata* share of the undistributed taxable income (as specifically adjusted) of the FPHC, if they were holders on the last day of our taxable year (or, if earlier, the last day on which the FPHC satisfies the Shareholder Test), but such *pro rata* share would increase their basis in their shares by a corresponding amount. In addition, if we or any of our subsidiaries were to become a FPHC, U.S. persons who acquire shares of our common stock from decedents would not receive a “stepped-up” basis in such shares. Instead, such holders would have a tax basis in such shares equal to the lesser of the decedent’s basis or fair market value. These special rules regarding foreign personal holding companies were recently repealed by the American Job Creation Act of 2004 (the “Act”) and these rules will not apply to our tax years beginning after December 31, 2004.

Foreign Investment Company Status. As described above, dividends we pay on our stock after December 31, 2002 are subject to a tax rate of no more than 15%, provided we are a “qualified foreign corporation” and the required un-hedged holding period is satisfied. We will not qualify for that status if, among other reasons, we are a “foreign investment company” in either the taxable year of the distribution or the preceding tax year. A foreign investment company is a foreign corporation that is (i) registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940 as a management company or as a unit investment trust or (ii) engaged primarily in the business of investing, reinvesting, or trading in securities, commodities, or derivative positions in securities or commodities, at a time when U.S. persons directly, indirectly, or constructively own more than 50% of either its total voting power or total stock value. Because of the manner in which we operate our business, we are not, nor do we expect to become, a foreign investment company. These special rules regarding foreign investment companies were recently repealed by the Act, and these rules will not apply to our tax years beginning after December 31, 2004.

U.S. Federal Income Tax Provisions Applicable to Non-United States Holders. Holders of shares of our common stock who are not U.S. Shareholders (“Non-U.S. Shareholders”) generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income taxes, including U.S. withholding taxes, on any gain realized on a sale, exchange or other disposition of the shares unless (1) such gain is effectively connected with the conduct by the Non-U.S. Shareholder of a trade or business in the United States or (2) in the case of gain realized by a

Non-U.S. Shareholder who is an individual, the Non-U.S. Shareholder is present in the United States for 183 days or more in the taxable year in which the sale or other disposition occurs and certain other conditions are met. A Non-U.S. Shareholder generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income or withholding tax on dividends received with respect to shares of our common stock, unless such income is effectively connected with the conduct by the Non-U.S. Shareholder of a trade or business in the United States.

U.S. Information Reporting and Backup Withholding. Dividend payments on shares of our common stock and proceeds from the sale, exchange, or redemption of shares of our common stock may be subject to information reporting to the Internal Revenue Service and possible U.S. backup withholding at a current rate of 30%. Backup withholding will not apply to a shareholder who furnishes a correct taxpayer identification number or certificate of foreign status and makes any other required certification or who is otherwise exempt from backup withholding. U.S. persons who are required to establish their exempt status generally must provide such certification on a properly completed Internal Revenue Service Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification). Non-U.S. shareholders generally will not be subject to U.S. information reporting or backup withholding. However, such shareholders may be required to provide certification of non-U.S. status in connection with payments received in the United States or through certain U.S.-related financial intermediaries.

Backup withholding is not an additional tax. Amounts withheld as backup withholding may be credited against a shareholder's U.S. federal income tax liability, and a shareholder may obtain a refund of any excess amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules by filing the appropriate claim for refund with the Internal Revenue Service and furnishing any required information.

Netherlands Taxation

The following is a summary of the material Dutch tax consequences generally applicable to an investment in shares of our common stock by a beneficial owner who is neither a citizen, resident nor deemed resident of The Netherlands. This summary does not comprehensively describe all possible tax issues that could influence a prospective shareholder's decision to acquire shares of our common stock. For example, this summary omits from discussion Netherlands' gift, estate and inheritance taxes. The summary is based on the Dutch tax legislation, published case law and other applicable regulations as at the date of this annual report, any of which may change possibly with retroactive effect.

Treatment of ADRs. In general, for Netherlands tax purposes, an owner of depositary receipts is considered the owner of the shares of stock represented by depositary receipts. Accordingly, except as otherwise noted, references in this section of the annual report to ownership of shares of our common stock includes ownership of the shares underlying the corresponding ADRs.

Dutch Dividend Withholding Tax. The Netherlands imposes a 25% withholding tax on amounts we distribute as dividends. The term "dividends" for this purpose includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) direct or indirect distributions in cash or in kind, deemed or constructive distributions, and repayments of additional paid-in capital not recognized as such for Netherlands dividend withholding tax purposes;
- (2) liquidation proceeds, proceeds of redemption of shares of common stock or, generally, except if a certain specific exemption applies, consideration paid by us for the repurchase of shares of common stock in excess of the average paid-in capital recognized for Netherlands dividend withholding tax purposes;
- (3) the par value of shares of common stock issued to a holder of shares of common stock or an increase of the par value of shares of common stock, as the case may be, to the extent that no contribution to capital, recognized for Netherlands dividend withholding tax purposes, was made or will be made; and
- (4) the partial repayment of paid-in capital, recognized for Netherlands dividend withholding tax purposes, if and to the extent that there are net profits ("*zuivere winst*") for dividend withholding tax purposes, unless the general meeting of our shareholders has previously resolved to make such repayment and provided that the par value of the shares of common stock concerned has been reduced by a corresponding

amount by changing our Articles of Association. As a result of contributions in kind (i.e., in shares) to our paid-in capital made prior to the listing of our common shares, a portion of such paid-in capital may not be recognized for Dutch dividend withholding tax purposes. Repayment of paid-in capital in the manner described above may consequently be subject to dividend withholding tax to the extent that dividends have been received from non-Netherlands subsidiaries out of profits generated after the above-mentioned contributions in kind.

If a double taxation convention is in effect between The Netherlands and the country of residence of a non-resident shareholder and depending on the terms of that double taxation convention, such non-resident shareholder may be eligible for a full or partial exemption from, or refund of, Dutch dividend withholding tax.

Under the U.S.-NL Treaty, dividends that we pay to citizens and residents of the United States who are the beneficial owners of shares of our common stock (other than an exempt organization or exempt pension organization) are generally eligible for a reduction of the 25% Netherlands withholding tax to 15%, or in the case of certain U.S. corporate shareholders owning at least 10% of our voting power, 5%, unless the shares of common stock held by such residents form part of the business property of a business carried on through a permanent establishment in The Netherlands. The same exception applies if the beneficial owner of the shares, being a citizen or resident of the United States, performs independent personal services from a fixed base situated in The Netherlands and the holding of the shares of common stock in respect of which the dividends are paid pertains to such fixed base in The Netherlands. The U.S.-NL Treaty also exempts from tax dividends we pay to exempt pension organizations and exempt organizations, as defined under the treaty. A shareholder of our common stock, other than an individual, will be ineligible for the benefits of the U.S.-NL Treaty unless the shareholder satisfies certain tests under the limitation on benefits provisions of Article 26 of the U.S.-NL Treaty. To prevent so-called dividend stripping, Netherlands law generally denies the treaty benefit of a reduced dividend withholding tax rate for any dividend paid to a recipient who is not the "beneficial owner" of the dividend.

To claim the reduced withholding tax rate on portfolio dividends under the U.S.-NL Treaty, a shareholder of our common stock (other than an exempt organization or exempt pension organization) must give us in duplicate a signed Form IB 92 USA before payment of the dividend. The form has a qualifying banker's affidavit, requiring a bank member of the New York Stock Exchange or the American Stock Exchange, or a member bank of the Federal Reserve System, to attest that the bank has custody of the shares of common stock, or that the bank has been shown that the common shares are property of the applicant. If the Form IB 92 USA is submitted before the dividend payment date and all relevant conditions are fulfilled, we will withhold tax from the dividend at the reduced treaty rate of 15%. If a shareholder of our common stock is unable to claim withholding tax relief in this manner, the shareholder can get a refund of excess tax withheld by filing a Form IB 92 USA, describing the circumstances that prevented the holder's claiming withholding tax relief. The holder must file the form within three years after the end of calendar year in which the tax had been levied.

A qualified exempt pension organization may obtain a full exemption from the dividend withholding tax if, before the payment of the dividend, the organization gives us in duplicate a signed Form IB 96 USA, along with the requisite banker's affidavit as described above, and includes IRS Form 6166 for the relevant year or a valid qualification certification issued by the competent Dutch tax office and complies with certain other requirements. Other qualifying exempt organizations are ineligible for relief from withholding at source but may claim a refund of the tax withheld by filing a Form IB 95 USA and complying with certain other formalities.

Holders of shares of our common stock through a depository will initially receive dividends subject to a withholding tax rate of 25%. Upon timely receipt of required documents concerning a holder's eligibility for the reduced rate under the U.S.-NL Treaty, dependent on the status of the holder, the dividend-disbursing agent (via any nominee) will pay an amount equal to 10% or 25% of the dividend to the holder.

Taxes on Income and Capital Gains. A shareholder of shares of our common stock will not be subject to any Netherlands taxes on income or capital gains in respect of dividends distributed by the Company or in

respect of capital gains realized on the disposition of shares of our common stock (other than the dividend withholding tax described above), provided that:

(1) such shareholder is neither resident nor deemed to be resident in The Netherlands, nor has elected to be subject to the rules of the Dutch Income Tax Act 2001 that apply to residents of The Netherlands;

(2) such shareholder does not have a business or an interest in a business that is, in whole or in part, carried on through a permanent establishment or a permanent representative in The Netherlands and to which business or part of a business, as the case may be, the shares of common stock are attributable;

(3) such shareholder does not perform independent personal services in The Netherlands giving rise to a fixed base in The Netherlands to which the shares of common stock are attributable; and

(4) the shares of common stock owned by such shareholder do not form part of a substantial interest or a deemed substantial interest, as defined below, in the share capital of the Company or, if such shares of common stock do form part of such an interest, they form part of the assets of a business other than a Netherlands business.

Generally, a shareholder of our common stock will have a substantial interest in our shares only if the shareholder, the spouse of the shareholder, certain other relatives (including foster children), or certain persons in the household of the shareholder, alone or together, whether directly or indirectly, own or possess certain rights (e.g., the right of usufruct) in, shares of our stock representing 5% or more of the total issued and outstanding capital (or the issued and outstanding capital of any class of shares), or rights to acquire the shares, whether or not already issued, that represent at any time 5% or more of the total issued and outstanding capital (or the issued and outstanding capital of any class of shares) or the ownership of certain profit participating certificates that relate to 5% or more of the annual profit and/or to 5% or more of the liquidation proceeds. Shareholders of our common stock who do not hold a substantial interest themselves will also be subject to the "substantial interest" regime if their spouse and/or certain other relatives hold a substantial interest. A deemed substantial interest is present if a substantial interest or part of a substantial interest has been disposed of, or is deemed to have been disposed of, without recognition of a gain.

If a shareholder has a substantial interest in the shares of our common stock and is resident of a country with which The Netherlands has concluded a convention to avoid double taxation, such shareholder may, depending on the terms of such double taxation convention, be eligible for an exemption from Netherlands income tax on capital gains realized upon the disposition or deemed disposition of shares of our common stock, or to a full or partial exemption from Netherlands income tax on dividends we pay.

Under the U.S.-NL Treaty, capital gains realized by a shareholder that has a substantial interest in the shares of our common stock and is a resident of the United States (as defined in the U.S.-NL Treaty) upon the disposition of shares of our common stock, are, with certain exceptions, generally exempt from Netherlands tax.

As indicated above, a shareholder of shares of our common stock, other than an individual, will be ineligible for the benefits of the U.S.-NL Treaty if such shareholder does not satisfy the limitation on benefits provisions under Article 26 of the U.S.-NL Treaty.

Distribution Surtax. As a result of a major tax reform effective as of January 1, 2001, we became subject to a 20% corporate income tax on "excessive" dividends we distribute from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2005 (the "Surtax").

Dividends (to be understood in the broadest sense including distributions in cash, liquidation proceeds and proceeds from a share repurchase) are considered to be excessive if, and to the extent that, in a certain calendar year the total amount we distribute as dividends exceeds the highest of the following amounts:

(1) 4% of our market capitalization at the beginning of the relevant calendar year;

(2) twice the amount of the average annual dividends (exclusive of extraordinary distributions) by reference to the three calendar years immediately preceding January 1, 2001; or