

Risk Factors

In addition to other information contained in this Annual Report, you should carefully consider the following factors before deciding to invest in our ordinary shares and American Depositary Shares ("ADSs"). There may be additional risks that we do not currently know of or that we currently deem immaterial based on the information available to us. Our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks, resulting in a decline in the trading price of our ordinary shares and ADSs.

Risks Related to Our Industry

We operate in a cyclical industry, which has in the past resulted in substantial fluctuations in our results.

The markets for our pulp and paper products are significantly affected by changes in industry capacity and output levels and by cyclical changes in the world economy. As a result of periodic supply / demand imbalances in the pulp and paper industry, these markets historically have been highly cyclical, with volatile pulp and paper prices. In addition, recent turmoil in the capital and credit markets has led to decreased availability of credit, which is having an adverse effect on the world economy and consequently has already affected, and may continue to adversely affect the markets for our products. The timing and magnitude of price increases or decreases in the pulp and paper market have generally varied by region and by type of pulp and paper.

Despite a relatively high level of pulp integration on a Group-wide basis, a significant increase in the prices for pulp or pulpwood could adversely affect our non-integrated and partially integrated operations if they are unable to raise paper prices sufficiently to offset the effects of increased costs. Other input cost increases including energy and chemicals may affect our operations if we are unable to raise paper prices sufficiently.

The majority of our fine paper sales consist of sales to merchants. However, the pricing of products for merchant sales can generally be changed between 30 to 90 days' advance notice to the merchant. Sales to converters may be subject to longer notice periods for price changes. Such notice periods generally would not exceed 6 to 12 months. In southern Africa, we have entered into longer-term fixed-price agreements of between 6 to 12 months duration for primarily packaging paper and newsprint sales with domestic customers. Such agreements accounted for approximately 5% of consolidated sales during fiscal 2008.

Most of our chemical cellulose sales contracts are multi-year contracts. However, the pricing is generally based on a formula linked to the NBSK price and reset on a quarterly basis.

As a result of the short-term duration of paper and chemical cellulose pricing arrangements, we are subject to cyclical decreases in market prices for these products. A downturn in paper or chemical cellulose prices could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

For further information, see "Item 4—Information on the Company—The Pulp and Paper Industry".

Global economic conditions could adversely affect our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Worldwide economic conditions have recently experienced a significant downturn due to credit conditions impacted by the subprime mortgage crisis and other factors, including slower economic activity, inflation and deflation concerns, reduced corporate profits, reduced or canceled capital spending, adverse business conditions and liquidity concerns, resulting in significant recessionary pressures and lower business and consumer confidence. Global demand for coated fine paper started to decline in the second half of fiscal 2008 and into fiscal 2009, and pulp demand and pulp prices decreased in the latter part of fiscal 2008 and into fiscal 2009. We may continue to experience a slowing in demand in all our major markets and downward pressure on pricing in many markets, which could adversely affect our business, results of operations and financial condition, including difficulties in maintaining previous operating performance. In anticipation of slowing demand, we took production down time in December 2008 and we will consider taking further down time in fiscal 2009 to balance supply and demand. While the full impact of the downturn may not occur until 2009 or beyond, we cannot predict the timing or the duration of this or any other downturn in the economy.

The markets for pulp and paper products are highly competitive, and many of our competitors have advantages that may adversely affect our ability to compete with them.

We compete against a large number of pulp and paper producers located around the world. A recent trend towards consolidation in the pulp and paper industry has created larger, more focused pulp and paper companies. Some of these companies benefit from greater financial resources or operate mills that are lower cost producers of pulp and paper products than our mills. We cannot assure you that each of our mills will be competitive. Furthermore, we cannot assure you that we will be able to take advantage of consolidation opportunities which may arise, or that any failure to exploit opportunities for growth would not make us less competitive. Increased competition, including a decrease in import duties in accordance with the terms of free trade agreements, could cause us to lose market share, increase expenditures or reduce pricing, any of which could have a material adverse effect on the results of our operations. In addition, competition may result in our being unable to increase selling prices of our products sufficiently or in time to offset the effects of increased costs without losing market share.

The cost of complying with environmental regulation may be significant to our business.

Our operations are subject to a wide range of environmental requirements in the various jurisdictions in which we operate. Although we strive to ensure that our facilities comply with all applicable environmental laws, we have in the past been and may in the future be subject to governmental enforcement action for failure to comply with environmental requirements. We expect to continue to incur significant expenditures and may face operational constraints to maintain compliance with applicable environmental laws, to upgrade equipment at our mills and to meet new regulatory requirements, including those in the United States, South Africa and Europe. Impacts from historical operations, including the land disposal of waste materials, may require further investigation and cleanup. In addition, we could become subject to environmental liabilities resulting from personal injury, property damage or natural resources damage. Expenditures to comply with future environmental requirements and the cost related to any potential environmental liabilities and claims could have a material adverse effect on our business and financial condition.

For further information, see "Item 4—Information on the Company—Environmental and Safety Matters".

The availability and cost of insurance cover can vary considerably from year to year as a result of events beyond our control, and this can result in our paying higher premiums and periodically being unable to maintain the levels or types of insurance carried.

Although the insurance market has been stable for the last three to four years, it remains cyclical and catastrophic events can change the state of the insurance market, leading to sudden and unexpected increases in premiums and deductibles and unavailability of coverage due to reasons totally unconnected with our business. In addition, recent turmoil and volatility in the global financial markets may adversely affect the insurance market. This may result in some of the insurers in our insurance portfolio failing and being unable to pay their share of claims.

Although we have successfully negotiated the renewal of our 2009 insurance cover at rates similar to those of 2008 and self-insured deductibles for any one property damage occurrence have remained at \$25 million, with an unchanged aggregate limit of \$40 million, we are unable to predict whether past or future events will result in less favorable terms. For property damage and business interruption, there generally does not seem to be cost effective cover available to full value; however, we believe that the loss limit cover of \$1 billion should be adequate for what we have determined as the reasonably foreseeable loss for any single claim.

While we believe our insurance programs provide adequate coverage for reasonably foreseeable losses, we continue working on improved risk management to lower the risk of incurring losses from uncontrolled incidents. We are unable to assure you that actual losses will not exceed our insurance coverage or that such excess will not be material.

New technologies or changes in consumer preferences may affect our ability to compete successfully.

We believe that new technologies or novel processes may emerge and that existing technologies may be further developed in the fields in which we operate. These technologies or processes could have an impact on

production methods or on product quality in these fields. Unexpected rapid changes in employed technologies or the development of novel processes that affect our operations and product range could render the technologies we utilize or the products we produce obsolete or less competitive in the future. Difficulties in assessing new technologies may impede us from implementing them and competitive pressures may force us to implement these new technologies at a substantial cost. Any such development could materially and adversely impact our revenues or net profits or both.

Consumer preferences may change as a result of the availability of alternative products or of services such as electronic media or the internet, which could negatively impact consumption of our products.

Risks Related to Our Business

Our indebtedness may impair our financial and operating flexibility.

Our level of indebtedness and the terms of our indebtedness could negatively impact our business and liquidity. As of September 2008, our interest bearing debt (long-term and short-term interest bearing debt plus overdraft, less cash on hand) was US\$ 2,405 million. While reduction of our indebtedness is one of our priorities, opportunities to grow within our businesses will continue to be evaluated, and the financing of any future acquisition or capital investment may include the incurrence of additional indebtedness.

The level of our debt has important consequences, including:

- our ability to obtain additional financing may be limited, which could limit, among other things, our ability to exploit growth opportunities;
- a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations may be required to make debt service payments;
- we are exposed to increases in interest rates because a portion of our debt bears interest at variable rates;
- we may be more leveraged than certain of our competitors;
- we may be more vulnerable to economic downturns and adverse changes in our business;
- our ability to withstand competitive pressure may be more limited; and
- certain of our financing arrangements contain covenants and conditions that may restrict the activities of certain Group companies.

During fiscal 2009, we have approximately US\$ 827 million outstanding under renewable facilities that mature. We expect to be able to continue to refinance these rolling facilities under our existing longer-term funding arrangements and bilateral banking facilities. Other than rolling facilities, the first significant scheduled debt repayment is a € 400 million facility maturing in December 2010. We will seek to refinance such indebtedness when it becomes due through the issuance of new debt in the global capital markets.

Our ability to refinance our debt, incur additional debt, the terms of our existing and additional debt and our liquidity could be affected by a number of adverse developments. In the third quarter of fiscal 2008, the global debt markets were subject to significant pressure triggered by the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market in the U.S. This liquidity crunch continued through and worsened in calendar 2008, leading to unprecedented volatility in the financial markets, an acute contraction in the availability of credit, including in interbank lending, and the failure of a number of leading financial institutions. Changes in investment markets, including changes in interest rates, exchange rates and returns from equity, property and other investments, have resulted in worsening general economic conditions. As a result, certain government bodies and central banks worldwide have undertaken unprecedented intervention programs, the effects of which remain uncertain. In addition, since 2006 the Group's credit ratings have been downgraded to sub-investment grade by Standard & Poor's (S&P) (currently BB / Stable) and Moody's (currently Ba2 / Stable). These adverse developments in the credit markets and in our credit rating, as well as other future adverse developments, such as further deterioration in the financial markets and a worsening of general economic conditions, may negatively impact our ability to issue additional debt as well as the amount and terms of the debt we are able to issue. Our liquidity will be adversely affected if we must repay all or a portion of our maturing debt from available cash or through use of our existing liquidity facilities. In addition, our results of operations will be

adversely impacted to the extent the terms of the debt we are able to issue are less favorable than the terms of the debt being refinanced. It is also possible that we will need to agree to covenants that place additional restrictions on our business.

We are subject to South African exchange controls, which may restrict the transfer of funds directly or indirectly between our subsidiaries or between the parent company and our subsidiaries and can restrict activities of our subsidiaries. We may also incur tax costs in connection with these transfers of funds. These exchange controls have affected the geographic distribution of our debt. As a result, acquisitions in the United States and Europe were financed with indebtedness incurred by companies in those regions. As a consequence, our ability or the ability of any of our subsidiaries to make scheduled payments on its debt will depend on its financial and operating performance, which will depend on various factors beyond our control, such as prevailing economic and competitive conditions. If we or any of our subsidiaries are unable to achieve operating results or otherwise obtain access to funds sufficient to enable us to meet our debt service obligations, we could face substantial liquidity problems. As a result, we might need to delay investments or dispose of material assets or operations. The timing of and the proceeds to be realized from any such disposition would depend upon circumstances at the time.

The current global liquidity and credit crises could have a negative impact on our major customers which in turn could materially adversely affect our results of operations and financial position.

The current global liquidity and credit crises are having a significant negative impact on businesses around the world; the impact of these crises on our major customers cannot be predicted and may be quite severe. A disruption in the ability of our significant customers to access sources of liquidity could cause serious disruptions or an overall deterioration of their businesses which could lead to a significant reduction in their future orders of our products and the inability or failure on their part to meet their payment obligations to us, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations and financial position.

We require a significant amount of cash to fund our business and our ability to generate sufficient cash depends on many factors, some of which are beyond our control.

Our ability to fund our working capital, capital expenditure and research and development requirements, to engage in future acquisitions, to make payments on our debt, to fund post-retirement benefit programs and to pay dividends will depend upon our future operating performance and our ability to generate sufficient cash. Our principal sources of liquidity are cash generated from operations and availability under our credit facilities and other debt arrangements. Our ability to generate cash depends, to some extent, on general economic, financial, competitive, market, regulatory and other factors, many of which are beyond our control. Our cash flow from operations may be adversely impacted by the downturn in worldwide economic conditions, which has resulted in a decline in global demand for our products and a softening of prices. The availability of debt financing has also been negatively impacted by the global credit crisis.

Our business may not generate sufficient cash flow from operations and additional debt and equity financing may not be available to us in a sufficient amount to enable us to meet our liquidity needs. If our future cash flows from operations and other capital resources are insufficient to fund our liquidity needs, we may be required to obtain additional debt or equity financing, refinance our indebtedness, reduce or delay our capital expenditures and research and development or to decrease the amount of the annual dividend. We may not be able to accomplish these alternatives on a timely basis or our satisfactory terms. The failure to do so could have an adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Fluctuations in the value of currencies, particularly the Rand and the Euro, in relation to the US dollar, have in the past had and could in the future have a significant impact on our earnings in these currencies.

Exchange rate fluctuations have in the past, and may in the future, affect the competitiveness of our products in relation to the products of pulp and paper companies based in other countries.

Fluctuations in the exchange rate between currencies, particularly the Rand and euro, in relation to the US dollar have in the past significantly affected and could in the future significantly affect our earnings.

Since the adoption of the euro by the European Union on January 1, 1999 (when the euro was trading at approximately \$1.18 per euro), it has fluctuated against the US dollar, reaching a low of approximately \$0.83 per euro in October 2000 before trading at approximately \$1.46, \$1.42, \$1.27 and \$1.20 per euro at the end of fiscal 2008, 2007, 2006 and 2005, respectively, and rising to a high of \$1.60 per euro in April 2008. On January 12, 2009, it was trading at approximately \$1.34 per euro. A significant weakening of the US dollar in comparison to the euro could redirect a significant amount of imports from Europe.

In recent years, the value of the Rand against the US dollar has fluctuated considerably. It has moved against the US dollar from a low of approximately R13.90 per US dollar in December 2001 to approximately R8.07, R6.87, R7.77 and R6.37 per US dollar at the end of fiscal 2008, 2007, 2006 and 2005, respectively. More recently, the Rand has been declining against US dollar and was trading at approximately R10.14 per US dollar on January 12, 2009.

For further information, see notes 2 and 30 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report and *"Item 5—Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—Currency Fluctuations"*.

There are risks relating to the countries in which we operate that could impact our earnings or affect your investment in our Company.

We own manufacturing operations in five countries in Europe, four states in the United States, South Africa and Swaziland, and have an investment in a joint venture in China. These risks arise from being subject to various economic, fiscal, monetary, regulatory, operational and political factors that affect companies generally and which may change as economic, social or political circumstances change. See *"Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—South African Economic and Political Environment"* and *"South African Exchange Controls"*.

Our southern African operations have in recent years accounted for a disproportionate percentage of our operating profits. In fiscal 2008 our sales originating from Europe were US\$ 2,720 million, from North America US\$ 1,664 million and from southern Africa US\$ 1,479 million; our operating assets were located US\$ 2,226 million in Europe, US\$ 1,285 million in North America and US\$ 2,139 million in southern Africa (excluding Corporate and other). However, in fiscal 2008 our operating profits and losses were a loss of US\$ 64 million in Europe, a profit of US\$ 92 million in North America and a profit of US\$ 279 million in southern Africa (excluding Corporate and other). Adverse developments in the economic, fiscal, monetary, regulatory or political circumstances in southern Africa could negatively affect our operations.

We face certain risks in dealing with HIV / AIDS which may have an adverse effect on our southern African operations.

There is a serious problem with HIV / AIDS infection among our southern African workforce, as there is in southern Africa generally. The HIV / AIDS infection rate of our southern African workforce is expected to increase over the next decade. The costs and lost workers' time associated with HIV / AIDS may adversely affect our southern African operations.

For further information, see *"Item 5—Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—South African Economic and Political Environment"*.

The inability to recover increasing input costs through increased prices of our products has had, and may continue to have, an adverse impact on our profitability.

The selling prices of the majority of the products manufactured and the purchase prices of many of the raw materials we use generally fluctuate in correlation with global commodity cycles. In addition, we have been experiencing increasing costs of a number of raw materials due to global trends beyond our control. The global warming and carbon footprint imperatives are causing the increased use of sustainable, non-fossil fuel, sources for electricity generation. Electricity generation companies are competing for the same raw material, namely wood and wood chips, in the same markets as us, driving prices upwards, especially during winter in the Northern hemisphere. In addition, the price of crude oil recently reached historically high levels. Although oil prices have since decreased, they are could return to high levels in the foreseeable future because of, among other things, political instability in the oil producing regions of the world. This impacts the oil-based commodities required by our business in the areas of energy (including electricity), transport and chemicals.

As occurred during the 2006, 2007 and 2008 fiscal years, a major potential consequence of the increase in the price of input commodities is our inability to counter this effect through increased selling prices. This results in reduced operating profit, and has a negative impact on business planning.

While we are in the process of implementing steps to reduce our cost of commodity inputs, other than maintaining a high level of pulp integration, the hedging techniques we apply on our raw materials and products are on a small scale and short term in nature. Moreover, in the event of significant increases in the prices of pulp, our non-integrated and partially integrated operations could be adversely affected if they are unable to raise paper prices by amounts sufficient to maintain margins.

Increased energy prices could adversely affect our operations.

We require substantial amounts of oil based chemicals, fuels and other resources for our production activities and transport of our timber products. We rely partly upon third parties for our supply of the energy resources consumed in our operations. The prices for and availability of energy resources may be subject to change or curtailment, respectively, due to, among other things, new laws or regulations, imposition of new taxes or tariffs, interruptions in production by suppliers, worldwide price levels and market conditions. The prices of various sources of energy may increase significantly from current levels. An increase in energy prices could materially adversely affect our results of operations, plantation valuation and financial condition.

A limited number of customers account for a significant amount of our revenues.

We sell a significant portion of our products to several major customers, including PaperlinX, Igepa, xpedx and Antalis. For Sappi Fine Paper products, PaperlinX and Igepa represented individually more than 10% of our total sales during both fiscal 2008 and fiscal 2007. Any adverse development affecting our principal customers or our relationships with our principal customers could have an adverse effect on our business and results of operations. See "Item 4–Information on the Company–Sappi Fine Paper–Marketing and Distribution–Customers" and "Item 4–Information on the Company–Sappi Forest Products–Marketing and Distribution–Customers".

Because of the nature of our business and workforce, we are facing challenges in the retention of management and the employment of skilled people that could adversely affect our business.

We are facing an aging demographic work profile among our management due to the mature nature of our industry and the rural and often remote location of our mills, together with generally long tenure of employees at the mills. As a result, we are likely to experience groups of employees leaving the company within a relatively short space of time of one another and may have difficulty attracting qualified replacements. The potential risks we face are a loss of institutional memory, skills, experience and management capabilities. We may be unable to attract and retain sufficient qualified replacements when and where necessary to avoid an adverse impact on our business.

Continued volatility in equity markets and declining yields in the bond markets could adversely affect the funded status and funding needs of our post employment benefit funds.

The general outlook for the forthcoming financial years is that bond and equity markets could move in very uncertain and unusual ways, which in turn could result in significant swings in yields on corporate bonds and government bonds as well as continued volatile within the equity markets. The risk exists that equity and property markets will not recover to the level of recent highs for many years as the global economic climate could further worsen. Consequently it is very difficult for us to predict which key factors, and how the interaction of these key factors, will change the post employment benefit funds' balance sheet funding status. As a result of the recent and continued risk of negative movements in the global equity and bond markets the funded status of our post employment benefit arrangements might have worsened subsequent to the fiscal year end.

Existing and potential changes in statutory minimum funding requirements may also affect the amount and timing of funding to be paid by us. Most funding requirements consider yields on assets such as government bonds or interbank interest rate swap curves, depending on the basis. If these yields remain at the current low

level experienced in the latter part of calendar 2008, we might need to pay additional contributions to meet minimum funding targets.

Catastrophic events affecting our plantations, such as fires, may adversely impact our ability to supply our southern African mills with timber from the region.

The southern African landscape is prone to, and ecologically adapted to, frequent fires. The risk of uncontrolled fires entering and burning significant areas of plantation is high, but under normal weather conditions this risk is managed through comprehensive fire prevention and protection plans. In 2007 and 2008, southern Africa experienced a number of abnormal weather events (hot, dry conditions fanned by extremely strong winds), which resulted in disastrous plantation fires across vast areas of eastern South Africa and Swaziland affecting 14,000 hectares and 26,000 hectares, respectively, of our plantations. There is some cause for concern that these abnormal weather conditions may be occurring more frequently as a result of the potential impact of climate change. In addition, because the transformation of land ownership and management in southern Africa has been moving ownership and management of plantations to independent growers, we have less ability to directly manage fire risk, as well as risks of other catastrophic events, such as pathogen and pest infestations. As a consequence, the risk of plantation fires or other catastrophic events remains high and may be increasing. Continued or increased losses of our wood source could jeopardize our ability to supply our mills with timber from the region.

The effects of climate change may have an impact on our business.

The global warming and carbon footprint imperatives are causing the increased use of sustainable, non-fossil fuel, sources for electricity generation. Electricity generation companies are competing for the same raw material, namely wood and wood chips, in the same markets as us, driving prices upwards, especially during winter in the Northern hemisphere.

The increased emphasis on water footprint in Southern Africa is causing increased focus on the sustainable use of water by our plants, on ensuring the quality of water released back into the water systems and on the control of effluent.

Climate change is also causing the spread of disease and pestilence into our plantations and fiber sources, way beyond their traditional geographic spreads.

Risks Related to the Acquisition of the Coated Graphic Paper Business acquired from M-real Corporation.

The risks associated with the Acquisition and the integration of the Acquired Business could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. We may not be able to successfully integrate the Acquired Business into our business.

We may experience unforeseen operating difficulties as we integrate the Acquired Business into our existing operations. These difficulties may disrupt our operations and require significant management attention and financial resources that would otherwise be available for day-to-day operations or the ongoing development or expansion of existing operations. The Acquisition involves risks, including:

- unexpected losses of customers or suppliers of the Acquired Business;
- challenges in integrating IT systems and administrative services;
- difficulties in retaining management and key personnel and in working cooperatively with the employees of the Acquired Business;
- difficulties in integrating the financial, technological and management standards, processes, procedures and controls of the Acquired Business with those of our existing operations;
- the performance by M-real Corporation and its parent company of their obligations under various agreements they will enter with us, including supply agreements;
- any inability of our management to cause our best practices to be applied to the Acquired Business;

- challenges in managing the increased scope, geographic diversity and complexity of our operations; and
- difficulties in mitigating contingent and assumed liabilities.

If we are unable to successfully meet the challenges associated with the Acquisition, this could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We may not be able to realize some or all of the anticipated benefits of the Acquisition or there may be delays and unexpected difficulties in realizing such benefits or higher costs.

Our estimates regarding the earnings, operating cash flow, capital expenditures and liabilities of the Acquired Business are based on information currently available to us and may prove to be incorrect. Since we were not involved in the management of the Acquired Business until the Acquisition closed on December 31, 2008, our assessment of the risks and opportunities may not be accurate. In addition, we may not realize any anticipated benefits of the Acquisition and may not be successful in integrating the Acquired Business into our existing business.

Achieving the anticipated benefits of the Acquisition will depend in part upon whether we integrate the Acquired Business in an efficient and effective manner. We may not be able to accomplish this integration process smoothly or successfully.

An inability to realize the full extent of the anticipated benefits of the Acquisition, as well as any delays encountered in the integration process, could have an adverse effect upon our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Risks Related to Our Shares

Your ability to sell a substantial number of ordinary shares may be restricted by the limited liquidity of shares traded on the JSE Limited.

The principal trading market for our ordinary shares is on the exchange operated by the JSE Limited ("JSE") (formerly known as the Johannesburg Stock Exchange). Historically, trading volumes and liquidity of shares listed on the JSE have been low in comparison with other major international markets. In fiscal 2008, 241 million of our ordinary shares were traded on the JSE and 51 million ADSs were traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The relatively low liquidity of shares traded on JSE Limited could affect your ability to sell ordinary shares. See "Significant shareholders may be able to influence the affairs of our Company", "Item 7—Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions—Major Shareholders", "Item 9—The Offer and Listing—Offer and Listing Details" and "Item 9—The Offer and Listing—Market Information".

Significant shareholders may be able to influence the affairs of our Company.

Although our investigation of beneficial ownership of our shares identified only two beneficial owners of more than 5% of our ordinary shares, holding approximately 17.7%, as shown in our shareholders' register at November 30, 2008, the five largest shareholders of record, four of which are nominees that hold shares for a multitude of beneficial owners, owned approximately 96% of our ordinary shares as of that date. See "Item 7—Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions—Major Shareholders".

The proposal by the South African Government to replace Secondary Tax on Companies with withholding tax on dividends and other distributions may impact the amount of dividends or other distributions received by our shareholders.

In October 2008, the South African Government tabled a bill containing proposed legislation to replace Secondary Tax on Companies with a 10% withholding tax on dividends and other distributions payable to shareholders for implementation in late 2009, following amendments to some of the existing double tax treaties. This is the second phase in a process that started in October 2007. Although this may reduce the tax payable by our South African operations, thereby increasing distributable earnings, the withholding tax will generally reduce the amount of dividends or other distributions received by our shareholders.

ITEM 4. INFORMATION ON THE COMPANY

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY

Sappi Limited is a public company incorporated in the Republic of South Africa. Our principal executive offices are located at 48 Ameshoff Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2001, Republic of South Africa and our telephone number is +27-11-407-8111. We currently have our primary listing on the JSE Limited (formerly the Johannesburg Stock Exchange) and have secondary listings on the New York and London Stock Exchanges.

Sappi Limited was founded and incorporated in 1936 in South Africa and is a corporation organized under the Companies Act 61 of 1973 of the Republic of South Africa.

Until 1990, we primarily expanded our operations within southern Africa. Since 1990, we have grown through acquisitions outside of southern Africa. In the mid 1990's we acquired S.D. Warren Company, a market leader in the United States in coated fine paper and a major producer of other speciality paper products. It now conducts business as Sappi Fine Paper North America. In the late 1990's we acquired KNP Leykam, a leading European producer of coated fine paper. KNP Leykam now conducts business as Sappi Fine Paper Europe. In 2002 we acquired Potlatch Corporation's coated fine paper business and have integrated it in Sappi Fine Paper North America.

In 2004 we acquired 34% of Jiangxi Chenming Paper Company, a joint venture which commissioned in mid-2005 a coated mechanical paper machine, mechanical pulp mill and de-inked pulp mill in China.

In August 2006, we announced the expansion of the existing capacity at Sappi Saiccor in South Africa, where Chemical Cellulose products are produced. The capacity of the mill was increased from approximately 600,000 metric tonnes per annum to 800,000 metric tonnes per annum. Production using the increased capacity commenced in September 2008. The plant is expected to be fully operational by mid February 2009.

In April 2006, Sappi announced a black economic empowerment transaction involving the sale of identified forestry land to a South African empowerment partner. We have received the final approval from the Minister of Land Affairs with regard to our Black Economic Empowerment transaction with Lereko Investments. In respect of this transaction, we recognized an immaterial charge to the income statement during fiscal 2008.

On December 31, 2008, we acquired the coated graphic paper business of M-real Corporation, including the brands, know-how, intellectual property, order books, and four mills. We also entered into agreements to sell the coated paper output of two mills, which will continue to be owned and operated by M-real Corporation, and contracts to purchase pulp, wood and energy from M-real Corporation and its associates. For information on this acquisition, see "Business Overview—The Acquisition of M-real Corporation's Coated Graphic Paper Business".

After the close of fiscal 2008 Sappi Fine Paper Europe closed our Blackburn Mill in the United Kingdom and ceased production from PM 5 at our Maastricht mill in the Netherlands. Profitable products produced at these mills have been moved to our other facilities in Europe.

For information on our principal investments and capital expenditures, see the description of our business in "Business Overview" and "Item 5—Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—Liquidity and Capital Resources".

BUSINESS OVERVIEW

Our Business

Sappi is a global paper and pulp group. We are a leading producer of coated fine paper widely used in books, brochures, magazines, catalogues and many other print applications. We are also the world's largest producer of chemical cellulose, used primarily in the manufacture of viscose fiber, acetated tow, and consumer and pharmaceutical products. In addition, we produce newsprint, uncoated graphic and business papers, premium quality packaging papers, a range of coated speciality papers and a range of paper grade pulp.