

Exchange controls

In 2001 and 2002 and until February 7, 2003, the Central Bank, among other restrictive measures, restricted the transfer of U.S. dollars abroad without its prior approval. In 2003 and 2004, the government substantially eased these restrictions.

However, in June 2005, the Argentine government imposed certain additional restrictions on inflows and outflows of foreign currency to the Argentine foreign exchange market. New indebtedness and debt refinancings with non-Argentine residents from the private sector entered in the local foreign exchange market must have a term of at least 365 calendar days.

Additionally, the regulation prohibits the prepayment of such indebtedness before the expiration of such term, irrespective of the payment method and whether or not liquidation includes a foreign exchange trade in the local market. The following transactions are exempted from this restriction: (i) foreign trade financings; (ii) primary debt security issuances through public offerings and listed on self-regulated markets; and (iii) the income of foreign financial indebtedness, provided that (a) the proceeds from the exchange settlement, net of taxes and expenses, are used for the purchase of foreign currency to cancel principal on foreign debt and/or to invest in long term foreign assets; or (b) they are agreed to and settled in an average term of not less than two years, including payments of the principal and interest contemplated in the calculation, and to the extent they are applied to invest in non-financial assets, as defined by the Central Bank.

As a result, any inflow of funds to the local foreign exchange market arising from, but not limited to: (i) foreign indebtedness, except in the above-mentioned instances; (ii) primary stock issuances of companies residing in Argentina not made pursuant to public offerings and not listed on self-regulated markets, to the extent they do not constitute direct investments; (iii) non-residents' portfolio investments to hold Argentine currency and assets and liabilities in the financial and non-financial private sector, to the extent that they do not arise from the primary subscription of debt securities issued pursuant to a public offering and listed on a self-regulated market and/or the primary subscription of stock of companies residing in Argentina pursuant to a public offering and listed on a self-regulated market; and (iv) non-residents' portfolio investments to purchase any right on securities issued by the public sector in the over-the-counter market, must comply with the following requirements, among others:

(1) fund inflows may only be transferred out of the local foreign exchange market upon the lapse of a term of 365 calendar days as from the date on which the funds entered the country; and

(2) the placement of a nominative, non-transferable and non-compensated deposit in an amount equal to the 30% of the amount involved in the transaction for a term of 365 calendar days, pursuant to the terms and under the conditions established in the applicable regulations.

As of the date hereof, original maturity of certain debt securities issued pursuant to a primary public offering and listed on a self-regulated market shall be exempt from the minimum stay period of 365 calendar days for purposes of purchasing foreign currency to repay such debt. These restrictions do not apply to the proceeds received by us from the issuance and sale of notes under this program.

E. Taxation

Material U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations

The following discussion is a summary of the material U.S. federal income tax considerations relating to the purchase, ownership and disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs. This discussion applies only to beneficial owners of Class B shares or ADSs that are "U.S. holders" (as defined below) that hold Class B shares or ADSs as "capital assets" (generally, property held for investment). This discussion is based on the U.S. Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), final, temporary and proposed Treasury regulations, administrative pronouncements of the Internal Revenue Service (the "IRS") and judicial decisions, all as currently in effect and all of which are subject to change (possibly on a retroactive basis) and to different interpretations. This discussion does not purport to address all U.S. federal income tax considerations that may be relevant to a particular holder, and you are urged to consult your own tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The discussion does not address the tax considerations that may be relevant to U.S. holders in special tax situations, such as:

- dealers in securities or currencies;

- insurance companies;
- tax-exempt organizations;
- traders in securities that elect to mark to market;
- certain financial institutions;
- partnerships or other pass-through entities;
- holders whose functional currency for U.S. federal income tax purposes is not the U.S. dollar;
- U.S. expatriates;
- holders that hold Class B shares or ADSs as part of a hedge, straddle, conversion transaction, constructive sale transaction, or other integrated transaction;
- holders that own, directly, indirectly, or constructively, 10% or more of the total combined voting power of our shares;
- real estate investment trusts; or
- regulated investment companies.

This discussion does not address the alternative minimum tax consequences of holding Class B shares or ADSs or the indirect consequences to holders of equity interests in partnerships or other entities that own our Class B shares or ADSs. Moreover, this discussion does not address the state, local, or non-U.S. income or other tax consequences of an investment in our Class B shares or ADSs, or any aspect of U.S. federal taxation other than income taxation.

We are uncertain whether we are currently a passive foreign investment company ("PFIC") or will be a PFIC in a future tax year. As discussed below under "Passive Foreign Investment Companies," the application of the PFIC rules to banks is unclear under present federal U.S. federal income tax law. A determination that we are a PFIC will generally result in unfavorable consequences to a U.S. holder. You should carefully consider the discussion under "Passive Foreign Investment Companies" and consult your own tax advisor regarding the consequences of investing in a PFIC. Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion assumes that we are not a PFIC.

You should also consult your own tax advisor regarding the U.S. federal, state, local, and foreign income and other tax consequences of purchasing, owning, and disposing of our Class B shares or ADSs in your particular circumstances.

For the purposes of this discussion, you are a "U.S. holder" if you are a beneficial owner of Class B shares or ADSs and you are for U.S. federal income tax purposes:

- an individual who is a citizen or resident of the United States;
- a corporation, or any other entity taxable as a corporation, created or organized in or under the laws of the United States, any state thereof, or the District of Columbia;

- an estate the income of which is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source; or
- a trust if (i) a court within the United States is able to exercise primary supervision over the administration of the trust and one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all substantial decisions of the trust or (ii) the trust has a valid election in effect under applicable Treasury regulations to be treated as a U.S. person.

If a partnership holds our Class B shares or ADSs, the tax treatment of a partner will generally depend upon the status of the partner and upon the activities of the partnership. A prospective investor who is a partner of a partnership holding our shares should consult its own tax advisor.

In general, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, U.S. holders that are beneficial owners of ADSs will be treated as the beneficial owners of the Class B shares represented by those ADSs.

Taxation of Dividends. Distributions of cash with respect to the Class B shares or ADSs (other than distributions in redemption of the Class B shares that are treated as sales or exchanges under Section 302(b) of the Code or upon our liquidation) will, to the extent made from our current or accumulated earnings and profits as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles, constitute dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Whether such current or accumulated earnings and profits will be sufficient for all such distributions on the Class B shares or ADSs to qualify as dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes depends on our future profitability and other factors, many of which are beyond our control. We do not currently maintain calculations of our earnings and profits under U.S. federal income tax principles. Unless and until these calculations are made, distributions should be presumed to be taxable dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes. As used below, the term “dividend” means a distribution that constitutes a dividend for U.S. federal income tax purposes. In general, cash dividends (including amounts withheld in respect of Argentine taxes) paid with respect to:

- the Class B shares generally will be includible in the gross income of a U.S. holder as ordinary income on the day on which the dividends are received by the U.S. holder; or
- the Class B shares represented by ADSs generally will be includible in the gross income of a U.S. holder as ordinary income on the day on which the dividends are received by the depository;

and, in either case, these dividends will not be eligible for the dividends received deduction allowed to corporations. To the extent that a distribution by us exceeds the amount of our earnings and profits, it will be treated as a non-taxable return of capital to the extent of the U.S. holder’s adjusted tax basis in the Class B shares or ADSs, and thereafter as capital gain.

Subject to certain exceptions for short-term and hedged positions, the amount of dividends received by certain U.S. holders (including individuals) with respect to the ADSs will be subject to taxation at a maximum rate of 15% under current law if the dividends represent “qualified dividend income.” Dividends paid on the ADSs will be treated as qualified dividend income if (i) the ADSs are readily tradable on an established securities market in the United States and (ii) we were not in the year prior to the year in which the dividend was paid, and are not in the year in which the dividend is paid, a PFIC. Under current guidance recently issued by the Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”), the ADSs should qualify as readily tradable on an established securities market in the United States so long as they are listed on the New York Stock Exchange, but no assurances can be given that the ADSs will be or remain readily tradable under future guidance. See below for a discussion of our potential PFIC classification.

Based on existing IRS guidance, it is not entirely clear whether dividends received with respect to the Class B shares will be treated as qualified dividend income, because the Class B shares are not themselves listed on a U. S. exchange. In addition, the U.S. Treasury Department has announced its intention to promulgate additional procedures pursuant to which holders of ADSs or Class B stock and intermediaries through whom such securities are held will be permitted to rely on certifications from issuers to establish that dividends are treated as qualified dividend income. Because such procedures have not yet been issued, we are not certain that we will be able to comply with them. You should consult your own tax advisors regarding the availability of the preferential dividend tax rate in the light of your own particular circumstances.

Dividends paid in pesos will be includible in the gross income of a U.S. holder in a U.S. dollar amount calculated by reference to the exchange rate in effect on the day they are received by the U.S. holder, in the case of Class B shares, or the depository, in the case of Class B shares represented by ADSs, regardless of whether the payment is in fact converted to U.S. dollars. If dividends paid in pesos are converted into U.S. dollars on the day they are received by the U.S. holder or the depository, as the case may be, U.S. holders should not be required to recognize foreign currency gain or loss in respect of the dividend income. Generally, any gain or loss resulting from currency exchange fluctuations during the period from the date the dividend payment is included in the gross income of a U.S. holder through the date such payment is converted into dollars (or otherwise disposed of) will be treated as U.S. source ordinary income or loss. However, U.S. holders should consult their own tax advisors regarding the treatment of any foreign currency gain or loss if any pesos received by the U.S. holder or the depository are not converted into U.S. dollars on the date of receipt.

A U.S. holder will be entitled, subject to a number of complex limitations and conditions, to claim a U.S. foreign tax credit in respect of any Argentine income taxes withheld on dividends received on shares. The limitation on foreign taxes eligible for credit is calculated separately with respect to specific classes of income. For this purpose, for taxable years beginning before January 1, 2007, the dividends we pay should generally constitute "passive income," or in the case of certain U.S. holders, "financial services income," and, for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2006, the dividends should generally constitute "passive category income," or in the case of certain U.S. holders, "general category income." U.S. holders who do not elect to claim a credit for any foreign taxes paid during the taxable year may instead claim a deduction of such Argentine income taxes, provided that the U.S. holder elects to deduct (rather than credit) all foreign income taxes paid or accrued for the taxable year. Dividends received with respect to the common shares will be treated as foreign source income, which may be relevant in calculating a U.S. holder's foreign tax credit limitation. The rules relating to computing foreign tax credits or deducting foreign taxes are extremely complex, and U.S. holders are urged to consult their independent tax advisors regarding the availability of foreign tax credits with respect to any Argentine income taxes withheld from a dividend on the common shares. The IRS has expressed concern that intermediaries in connection with depository arrangements may be taking actions that are inconsistent with the claiming of foreign tax credits by U.S. persons who are holders of depository shares. Accordingly, investors should be aware that the discussion above regarding the availability of foreign tax credits for Argentine withholding tax on dividends paid with respect to Class B shares represented by ADSs could be affected by future action taken by the IRS.

Taxation of Capital Gains. Deposits and withdrawals of Class B shares by U.S. holders in exchange for ADSs will not result in the realization of gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

In general, gain or loss realized by a U.S. holder on the sale, redemption or other taxable disposition of Class B shares or ADSs will be subject to U.S. federal income taxation as capital gain or loss in an amount equal to the difference between the amount realized (including the gross amount of the proceeds of the sale or other taxable disposition before the deduction of any Argentine tax) on the taxable disposition and such U.S. holder's adjusted basis in the Class B shares or the ADSs. Capital gains of certain non-corporate U.S. holders, including individuals, derived with respect to capital assets held for more than one year may be eligible for various reduced rates of taxation. For example, for capital assets held for over one year, the maximum rate of tax under current law generally will be 15% (rather than the higher rates of tax generally applicable to items of ordinary income). The deductibility of capital losses is subject to limitations. Any gain or loss realized by a U.S. holder will generally be treated as a U.S. source gain or loss for U.S. foreign tax credit purposes.

If Argentine withholding tax is imposed on the sale or disposition of Class B shares or ADSs, the amount realized by a U.S. holder will include the gross amount of the proceeds of such sale or disposition before deduction of the Argentine withholding tax. The availability of U.S. foreign tax credits for these Argentine taxes and any Argentine taxes imposed on distributions that do not constitute dividends for U.S. tax purposes is subject to various limitations and involves the application of rules that depend on a U.S. holder's particular circumstances. In particular, because any gain from the sale or other disposition of Class B Shares or ADSs generally will be treated as U.S. source income, a U.S. holder may not be able to fully utilize its U.S. foreign tax credits in respect of such Argentine withholding taxes unless such U.S. holder has other income from foreign sources. U.S. holders are urged to consult their own tax advisors regarding the application of the U.S. foreign tax credit rules to their investment in, and disposition of, Class B shares or ADSs.

Passive Foreign Investment Companies. U.S. holders should carefully consider the discussion below regarding our potential treatment as a PFIC for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

In general, if during any taxable year of a non-U.S. corporation, 75% or more of the corporation's gross income consists of certain types of "passive" income, or the average value during a taxable year of the "passive assets" of the corporation (generally assets that generate passive income) is 50% or more of the average value of all the corporation's assets, the corporation will be treated as a PFIC under U.S. federal income tax law. Passive income for this purpose generally includes interest, dividends, royalties, rents and gains from commodities and securities transactions. Certain exceptions are provided, however, for passive income derived in the conduct of an active business.

We are unable to determine if we are a PFIC because the application of the PFIC rules to banks is unclear under present U.S. federal income tax law. Banks generally derive a substantial part of their income from assets that are interest bearing or that otherwise could be considered passive under the PFIC rules. The IRS has issued a notice and has proposed regulations that exclude from passive income any income derived in the active conduct of a banking business by a qualifying foreign bank (the "active bank exception"). The IRS notice and proposed regulations have different requirements for qualifying as a foreign bank, and for determining the banking income that may be excluded from passive income under the active bank exception. Moreover, the proposed regulations have been outstanding since 1994 and will not be effective unless finalized.

Because final regulations have not been issued and because the notice and the proposed regulations are inconsistent, our status under the PFIC rules is subject to considerable uncertainty. While we conduct, and intend to continue to conduct, a significant banking business, there can be no assurance that we will satisfy the specific requirements for the active bank exception under either the IRS notice or the proposed regulations. In this regard, we presently derive significant income from securities that may not constitute banking income for purposes of the active bank exception. Accordingly, U.S. holders could be subject to U.S. federal income tax under the rules described below. U.S. holders should consult their tax advisors regarding this issue.

If we are treated as a PFIC for any taxable year, a U.S. holder would be subject to special rules (and may be subject to increased tax liability and form filing requirements) with respect to (a) any gain realized on the sale or other disposition of Class B shares or ADSs, and (b) any "excess distribution" made by us to the U.S. holder (generally, any distribution during a taxable year in which distributions to the U.S. holder on the Class B shares or ADSs exceed 125% of the average annual distributions the U.S. holder received on the Class B shares or ADSs during the preceding three taxable years or, if shorter, the U.S. holder's holding period for the Class B shares or ADSs). Under those rules, (a) the gain or excess distribution would be allocated ratably over the U.S. holder's holding period for the Class B shares or ADSs, (b) the amount allocated to the taxable year in which the gain or excess distribution is realized and to taxable years before the first day on which we became a PFIC would be taxable as ordinary income, (c) the amount allocated to each prior year in which we were a PFIC would be subject to U.S. federal income tax at the highest tax rate in effect for that year and (d) the interest charge generally applicable to underpayments of U.S. federal income tax would be imposed in respect of the tax attributable to each prior year in which we were a PFIC. In addition, as discussed above, a U.S. holder would not be entitled to (if otherwise eligible for) the preferential reduced rate of tax payable on certain dividend income.

A U.S. holder may mitigate these effects by electing mark-to-market treatment for its ADSs or Class B shares, provided the relevant shares constitute "marketable stock" as defined in Treasury regulations. Our ADSs and our Class B shares will be "marketable stock" if they are "regularly traded" on a "qualified exchange or other market". The term "qualified exchange or other market" includes the New York Stock Exchange. Our ADSs will be "regularly traded" if they are traded on at least 15 days during each calendar quarter, other than in de minimis quantities. For the calendar year of our initial public offering, our ADSs will be regularly traded if they are regularly traded, other than in de minimis amounts, on one-sixth of the days remaining in the quarter in which the offering occurred, and on at least 15 days during each remaining quarter of the calendar year. No assurance can be provided that our ADSs will be characterized as regularly traded on a qualified exchange or other market for this purpose. Our Class B shares will be treated as listed on a "qualified exchange or other market" for purposes of the relevant Treasury regulations if the exchange on which they are listed has sufficient trading volume, listing, financial disclosure and surveillance, is regulated or supervised by a governmental authority of the country in which the market is located, and meets certain other characteristics. It is unclear whether the Buenos Aires Stock Exchange would meet these requirements and whether there would be sufficient trading of the Class B shares for the Class B shares to be characterized as "regularly traded." It is therefore unclear whether a U.S. holder would be able to elect mark-to-market treatment for the Class B shares.

A U.S. holder electing the mark-to-market regime generally would compute gain or loss at the end of each taxable year as if the Class B shares or ADSs had been sold at fair market value. Any gain recognized by the U.S. holder under mark-to-market treatment, or on an actual sale, would be treated as ordinary income, and the U.S. holder would be allowed an ordinary deduction for any decrease in the value of Class B shares or ADSs as of the end of any taxable year, and for any loss recognized on an actual sale, but only to the extent, in each case, of previously included mark-to-market income not offset by previously deducted decreases in value. Any loss on an actual sale of Class B shares or ADSs would be a capital loss to the extent in excess of previously included mark-to-market income not offset by previously deducted decreases in value. A U.S. holder's tax basis in Class B shares or ADSs would increase or decrease by gain or loss taken into account under the mark-to-market regime.

A mark-to-market election under the PFIC rules applies to all future years of an electing U.S. holder during which the Class B shares or ADSs are regularly traded on a qualifying exchange, unless revoked with the IRS's consent.

If we are characterized as a PFIC and, at any time, we have non-U.S. subsidiaries that are classified as PFICs, U.S. holders generally will be deemed to own, and also would be subject to the PFIC rules with respect to, their indirect ownership interests in that lower-tier PFIC. If we are characterized as a PFIC, the U.S. holder could incur liability for the deferred tax and interest charge described above if either

- (1) we receive a distribution from, or dispose of all or part of our interest in, the lower-tier PFIC or
- (2) the U.S. holder disposes of all or part of its Class B shares or ADSs. A mark-to-market election under the PFIC rules with respect to shares would not apply to a lower-tier PFIC, and a U.S. holder would not be able to make such a mark-to-market election in respect of its indirect ownership interest in that lower-tier PFIC. Consequently, U.S. holders of shares could be subject to the PFIC rules with respect to income of the lower-tier PFIC the value of which already had been taken into account indirectly via mark-to-market adjustments. Furthermore, if we are characterized as a PFIC, a U.S. holder will be required to file an IRS Form 8621.

Information Reporting and Backup Withholding. Information reporting requirements will apply to dividends in respect of the Class B shares or ADSs or the proceeds from the sale, exchange, or redemption of the Class B shares or ADSs paid within the United States (and, in some cases, outside of the United States) to U.S. holders, unless, in either case, the U.S. holder is an exempt recipient (such as a corporation). A 28% backup withholding tax may apply to such amounts if the U.S. holder fails to provide an accurate taxpayer identification number or to report interest and dividends required to be shown on its U.S. federal income tax returns. The amount of any backup withholding from a payment to a U.S. holder will be allowed as a credit against the U.S. holder's U.S. federal income tax liability, provided that the required information is timely furnished to the IRS.

Material Argentine Tax Considerations

The following discussion is a summary of the of the material Argentine tax considerations relating to the purchase, ownership and disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs.

Dividends tax. Dividends paid on our Class B shares or ADSs, whether in cash, property or other equity securities, are not subject to income tax withholding, except for dividends paid in excess of our taxable accumulated income at the previous fiscal period which are subject to withholding at the rate of 35% applicable on such excess and regarding both local and foreign shareholders.

Capital gains tax. Due to the amendments made to the Argentine Income Tax Law by Law 25,414, Decree 493/2001 (the "AITL") and the abrogation of Law 25,414 by 25,556, it is not clear whether certain amendments are in effect. Although opinion No. 351 of the National Treasury General Attorney Office solved the most important matters related to capital gains, certain issues still remain unclear.

- Resident individuals. Pursuant to a reasonable construction of the AITL: (i) income obtained from the sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs by resident individuals who do not sell or dispose of Argentine shares on a regular basis would not be subject to Argentine income tax; and (ii) although there still exists uncertainty regarding this issue, income obtained from the sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs by resident individuals who sell or dispose of Argentine shares on a regular basis should be exempt from Argentine income tax.
- Foreign beneficiaries. Capital gains obtained by non-residents or foreign entities from the sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs are exempt from income tax. Pursuant to a reasonable construction of the AITL, and although the matter is not completely free from doubt, such treatment should also apply to those foreign beneficiaries that qualify as offshore entities.
- Local entities. Capital gains obtained by Argentine entities (in general, entities organized or incorporated under Argentine law, certain traders and intermediaries, local branches of non-Argentine entities, sole proprietorships and individuals carrying on certain commercial activities in Argentina) derived from the sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs are subject to income tax at the rate of 35%. Losses arising from the sale of our Class B shares or ADSs can be offset against the same type of income.

Personal assets tax. Argentine entities, such as us, have to pay the personal assets tax corresponding to Argentine and foreign individuals and foreign entities for the holding of our shares at December 31 of each year. The applicable tax rate is 0.5% and is levied on the *valor patrimonial proporcional*, or the book value, of the shares arising from the last balance sheet. Pursuant to the Personal Assets Tax Law, the Argentine company is entitled to seek reimbursement of such paid tax from the applicable Argentine individuals and/or foreign shareholders.

Value added tax. The sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs and the distribution of dividends are exempted from the value added tax.

Transfer taxes. The sale, exchange or other disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs is not subject to transfer taxes.

Stamp taxes. Argentine residents may be subject to stamp tax in certain Argentine provinces in case transfer of our Class B shares or ADSs is performed or executed in such jurisdiction by means of written agreements. No stamp taxes are levied in the City of Buenos Aires.

Other taxes. There are no Argentine inheritance or succession taxes applicable to the ownership, transfer or disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs. In addition, neither the minimum presumed income tax nor any local gross turnover tax is applicable to the ownership, transfer or disposition of our Class B shares or ADSs.

Tax treaties. Argentina has signed tax treaties for the avoidance of double taxation with Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. There is currently no tax treaty or convention in effect between Argentina and the United States. It is not clear when, if ever, a treaty will be ratified or entered into effect. As a result, the Argentine tax consequences described in this section will apply, without modification, to a holder of our Class B shares or ADSs that is a U.S. resident. Foreign shareholders located in certain jurisdictions with a tax treaty in force with Argentina may be exempted from the payment of the personal asset tax.