

Sale Agreement for Part of the Oil, Gas and Petrochemicals Business

On January 16, 2004 we announced that our subsidiary, ABB Handels-Und Verwaltungs AG, had entered into an agreement to sell the upstream part of our Oil, Gas and Petrochemicals business to Laradew Limited, a new company formed by a private equity consortium consisting of Candover Partners, JP Morgan Partners and 3i Group. The sale includes our U.S.-based Vetco Gray unit and our Norway-based Offshore Systems business. In July 2004, the Company completed the sale of the Upstream business for an initial purchase price of \$925 million. Net cash proceeds from the sale were approximately \$800 million, reflecting the initial purchase price adjusted for unfunded pension liabilities and changes in net working capital. On February 9, 2005, the purchasers and we entered into a Settlement Agreement and Amendment finalizing the sales price. As part of the sale, we have agreed, among other things, to terminate certain securitization programs and operational leases, to indemnify the purchaser against certain pre-existing environmental and tax liabilities, to reimburse the purchaser against financial losses that may be incurred on certain ongoing projects of the business. See Exhibits 4.7 and 4.8 to this report.

Sale Agreement for the Sale of the Global Reinsurance and Insurance Businesses

On December 8, 2003, our subsidiary ABB Holding AG (which in December 2003 was merged into ABB Asea Brown Boveri Ltd) entered into an agreement to sell the global reinsurance and insurance businesses which we have operated through the Sirius group of companies to a subsidiary of White Mountains Insurance Group ("WMI") for an initial purchase consideration of SEK 3.22 billion (approximately \$425 million). The transaction closed in April, 2004. As part of the sale we have undertaken to indemnify WMI, among other things, for potential losses in excess of reserves established in the 2003 financial accounts relating to the future final settlement of certain disputes as well as potential losses arising from certain guarantees issued by the Sirius business. See Exhibits 4.9 and 4.10 to this report.

EXCHANGE CONTROLS

Other than in connection with government sanctions imposed on Cote d'Ivoire, Iraq, Liberia, Myanmar, Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe and persons and organizations with connection to Osama bin Laden, the "al Qaeda" group or the Taliban, there are currently no laws, decrees or regulations in Switzerland that restrict the export or import of capital, including, but not limited to, Swiss foreign exchange controls on payment of dividends, interest or liquidation proceeds, if any, to non-Swiss resident holders of shares. In addition, there are no limitations imposed by Swiss law or our articles of incorporation on the rights of non-Swiss residents or non-Swiss citizens to hold or vote our shares.

TAXATION

The following is a summary of the material Swiss and United States federal income tax consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of our shares or ADSs.

Swiss Taxation

Withholding Tax on Dividends and Distributions

Dividends paid and similar cash or in-kind distributions that we make to a holder of shares or ADSs (including dividends on liquidation proceeds and stock dividends) are subject to a Swiss federal withholding tax at a rate of 35 percent. We must withhold the tax from the gross distribution and pay it to the Swiss Federal Tax Administration.

Obtaining a Refund of Swiss Withholding Tax for U.S. Residents

The Convention Between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with Respect to Taxes on Income, which entered into force on December 19, 1997 and which we will refer to in the following discussion as the Treaty, allows U.S. resident individuals or U.S. corporations to seek a refund of the Swiss withholding tax paid on dividends in respect of our shares or ADSs. U.S. resident individuals and U.S. corporations holding less than 10 percent of the voting rights in respect of our shares or ADSs are entitled to seek a refund of withholding tax to the extent the tax withheld exceeds 15 percent of the gross dividend. U.S. corporations holding 10 percent or more of the voting rights of our shares or ADSs are entitled to seek a refund of withholding tax to the extent the tax withheld exceeds 5 percent of the gross dividend.

Claims for refunds must be filed with the Swiss Federal Tax Administration, Eigerstrasse 65, 3003 Bern, Switzerland. The form used for obtaining a refund is Swiss Tax Form 82 (82C for companies; 82E for other entities; 82I for individuals). This form may be obtained from any Swiss Consulate General in the United States or from the Swiss Federal Tax Administration at the address above. The form must be filled out in triplicate with each copy duly completed and signed before a notary public in the United States. The form must be accompanied by evidence of the deduction of withholding tax withheld at the source.

Stamp Duties upon Transfer of Securities

The sale of shares or ADSs, whether by Swiss resident or non-resident holders, may be subject to a Swiss securities transfer stamp duty of up to 0.15 percent calculated on the sale proceeds if it occurs through or with a Swiss bank or other Swiss securities dealer as defined in the Swiss Federal Stamp Tax Act. In addition to the stamp duty, the sale of shares or ADSs by or through a member of the SWX Swiss Exchange may be subject to a stock exchange levy.

United States Taxes

The following is a summary of the material U.S. federal income tax consequences of the ownership of shares or ADSs. This summary does not purport to address all of the tax considerations that may be relevant to a decision to purchase, own or dispose of shares or ADSs. This summary assumes that holders are initial purchasers of shares or ADSs and hold shares or ADSs as capital assets. This summary does not address tax considerations applicable to holders that may be subject to special tax rules, such as dealers or traders in securities or currencies, partnerships owning shares or ADSs, tax-exempt entities, banks, insurance companies, holders that own (or are deemed to own) at least 10 percent or more (by voting power or value) of the stock of ABB, investors whose functional currency is not the U.S. dollar, and persons that will hold shares or ADSs as part of a position in a straddle or as part of a hedging or conversion transaction for U.S. tax purposes. This discussion does not address aspects of U.S. taxation other than U.S. federal income taxation, nor does it address state, local or foreign tax consequences of an investment in shares or ADSs.

This summary is based (1) on the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, U.S. Treasury Regulations and judicial and administrative interpretations thereof, in each case as in effect and

available on the date of this registration statement and (2) in part, on representations of the depositary and the assumption that each obligation in the deposit agreement and any related agreement will be performed in accordance with its terms. The U.S. tax laws and the interpretation thereof are subject to change, which change could apply retroactively and could affect the tax consequences described below.

For purposes of this summary, a U.S. holder is a beneficial owner of shares or ADSs that, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, is:

- a citizen or resident of the United States;
- a corporation created or organized in or under the laws of the United States or any state, including the District of Columbia;
- an estate if its income is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source; or
- a trust if such trust validly has elected to be treated as a U.S. person for U.S. federal income tax purposes or if (1) a U.S. court can exercise primary supervision over its administration and (2) one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all of its substantial decisions.

If a partnership (including any entity treated as a partnership for United States federal income tax purposes) is a beneficial owner of shares or ADSs the treatment of a partner in the partnership will generally depend on the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. If you are a partner in a partnership that holds shares or ADSs you should consult your tax advisor.

A non-U.S. holder is a beneficial owner of shares or ADSs that is not a U.S. holder.

Each prospective purchaser should consult the purchaser's tax advisor with respect to the U.S. federal, state, local and foreign tax consequences of acquiring, owning or disposing of shares or ADSs.

Ownership of ADSs in General

For U.S. federal income tax purposes, a holder of ADSs generally will be treated as the owner of the shares represented by the ADSs.

The U.S. Treasury Department has expressed concern that depositaries for American depositary receipts, or other intermediaries between the holders of shares of an issuer and the issuer, may be taking actions that are inconsistent with the claiming of U.S. foreign tax credits by U.S. holders of those receipts or shares. Accordingly, the analysis regarding the availability of a U.S. foreign tax credit for Swiss taxes and sourcing rules described below could be affected by future actions that may be taken by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Distributions

Subject to the discussion below under "—Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations," if you are a U.S. holder, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, the gross amount of any distribution (other than certain distributions, if any, of shares distributed to all shareholders of ABB, including holders of ADSs) made to you with respect to shares or ADSs, including the amount of any Swiss taxes withheld from the distribution, will constitute dividends to the extent of ABB's current and accumulated earnings and profits (as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles). Subject to the discussion below under "—Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations," non-corporate U.S. Holders generally will be taxed on such distributions at the lower rates applicable to long-term capital gains (i.e., gains from the sale of capital assets held for more than one year) with respect to taxable years beginning on or before December 31, 2008. These dividends will not be eligible for the dividends received deduction generally allowed to corporate U.S. holders. Subject to the discussion below under "—Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations," if distributions with respect to shares or ADSs exceed ABB's current and accumulated earnings and profits as determined under U.S.

federal income tax principles, the excess would be treated first as a tax-free return of capital to the extent of your adjusted tax basis in the shares or ADSs. Any amount in excess of the amount of the dividend and the return of capital would be treated as capital gain. ABB does not maintain calculations of its earnings and profits under U.S. federal income tax principles.

If you are a U.S. holder, dividends paid in Swiss francs, including the amount of any Swiss taxes withheld from the dividends, will be included in your gross income in an amount equal to the U.S. dollar value of the Swiss francs calculated by reference to the spot exchange rate in effect on the day the dividends are includible in income. In the case of ADSs, dividends generally are includible in income on the date they are received by the depositary, regardless of whether the payment is in fact converted into U.S. dollars at that time. If dividends paid in Swiss francs are converted into U.S. dollars on the day they are includible in income, you generally should not be required to recognize foreign currency gain or loss with respect to the conversion, if you are a U.S. holder. However, any gains or losses resulting from the conversion of Swiss francs between the time of the receipt of dividends paid in Swiss francs and the time the Swiss francs are converted into U.S. dollars will be treated as ordinary income or loss to you, as the case may be, if you are a U.S. holder. The amount of any distribution of property other than cash will be the fair market value of the property on the date of distribution.

If you are a U.S. holder, you will have a basis in any Swiss francs received as a refund of Swiss withholding taxes equal to a U.S. dollar amount calculated by reference to the exchange rate in effect on the date of receipt of the dividend on which the tax was withheld. (See "-Swiss Taxation-Obtaining a Refund of Swiss Withholding Tax for U.S. Residents" above.)

If you are a U.S. holder, dividends received by you with respect to shares or ADSs will be treated as foreign source income, which may be relevant in calculating your foreign tax credit limitation. Subject to certain conditions and limitations, Swiss tax withheld on dividends may be deducted from your taxable income or credited against your United States federal income tax liability. However, to the extent that you are a U.S. holder and would be entitled to a refund of Swiss withholding taxes pursuant to the U.S.-Switzerland tax treaty, you may not be eligible for a United States foreign tax credit with respect to the amount of such withholding taxes which may be refunded, even if you fail to claim such refund. See "-Swiss Taxation-Obtaining a Refund of Swiss Withholding Tax for U.S. Residents." The limitation on foreign taxes eligible for credit is calculated separately with respect to specific classes of income. For this purpose, dividends distributed by ABB generally will constitute passive income, or, in the case of certain U.S. holders, financial services income. The rules relating to the determination of the U.S. foreign tax credit are complex, and, if you are a U.S. holder, you should consult your tax advisor to determine whether and to what extent you would be entitled to this credit.

Subject to the discussion below under "-Backup Withholding and Information Reporting," if you are a non-U.S. holder of shares or ADSs, you generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income or withholding tax on dividends received on shares or ADSs, unless the dividends are effectively connected with the conduct by you of a trade or business in the United States, or the dividends are attributable to a permanent establishment or fixed base that is maintained in the United States if that is required by an applicable income tax treaty as a condition for subjecting a non-U.S. holder to U.S. taxation on a net income basis. In such cases, you will be taxed in the same manner as a U.S. holder. Moreover, if you are a corporate non-U.S. holder, you may be subject, under certain circumstances, to an additional branch profits tax on any effectively connected dividends at a 30 percent rate, or at a lower rate if you are eligible for the benefits of an income tax treaty that provides for a lower rate.

Sale or Exchange of Shares or ADSs

Subject to the discussion below under "-Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations," if you are a U.S. holder that holds shares or ADSs as capital assets, you generally will recognize capital

gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes upon a sale or exchange of your shares or ADSs in an amount equal to the difference between your adjusted tax basis in the shares or ADSs and the amount realized on their disposition. If you are a noncorporate U.S. holder, the maximum marginal U.S. federal income tax rate applicable to the gain will be lower than the maximum marginal U.S. federal income tax rate applicable to ordinary income (other than certain dividends) if your holding period for the shares or ADSs exceeds one year (i.e., long-term capital gains). If you are a U.S. holder, the gain or loss, if any, recognized by you generally will be treated as U.S. source income or loss, as the case may be, for U.S. foreign tax credit purposes. Certain limitations exist on the deductibility of capital losses for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

If you are a U.S. holder and you receive any foreign currency on the sale of shares or ADSs, you may recognize U.S. source ordinary income or loss as a result of currency fluctuations between the date of the sale of the shares or ADS, as the case may be, and the date the sales proceeds are converted into U.S. dollars.

Subject to the discussion below under "-Backup Withholding and Information Reporting," if you are a non-U.S. holder of shares or ADSs, you generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income or withholding tax on gain realized on the sale or exchange of your shares or ADSs unless (1) the gain is effectively connected with the conduct by you of a trade or business in the United States, or the gain is attributable to a permanent establishment or fixed base that is maintained in the United States if that is required by an applicable income tax treaty as a condition for subjecting a non-U.S. holder to U.S. taxation on a net income basis, or (2) if you are an individual non-U.S. holder, you are present in the United States for 183 days or more in the taxable year of the sale or exchange and certain other conditions are met. Moreover, if you are a corporate non-U.S. holder, you may be subject, under certain circumstances, to an additional branch profits tax on any effectively connected gains at a 30 percent rate, or at a lower rate if you are eligible for the benefits of an income tax treaty that provides for a lower rate.

Passive Foreign Investment Company Considerations

A non-U.S. corporation will be classified as a "passive foreign investment company," or a PFIC, for United States federal income tax purposes in any taxable year in which, after applying certain look-through rules, either

- at least 75 percent of its gross income is "passive income"; or
- at least 50 percent, on average, of the gross value of its assets is attributable to assets that produce "passive income" or are held for the production of passive income.

Passive income for this purpose generally includes dividends, interest, certain royalties, certain rents and gains from commodities and securities transactions.

Based on certain estimates of its gross income and gross assets and the nature of its business, ABB believes that it will not be classified as a PFIC for the taxable year ending December 31, 2004. ABB's status in future years will depend on its assets and activities in those years. ABB has no reason to believe that its assets or activities will change in a manner that would cause it to be classified as a PFIC. If ABB were a PFIC, and you are a U.S. holder, you generally would be subject to imputed interest charges and other disadvantageous tax treatment with respect to any gain from the sale or exchange of, and certain distributions with respect to, your shares or ADSs, including the denial of the taxation of certain dividends at the lower rates applicable to long-term capital gains (as discussed above in "-Distributions").

If ABB were a PFIC, you may be able to make a variety of elections which might alleviate certain of the tax consequences referred to above. However, it is expected that the conditions necessary for

making such elections will not be present in the case of shares or ADSs. You should consult your own tax advisor regarding the tax consequences that would arise if ABB were treated as a PFIC.

Backup Withholding and Information Reporting

U.S. backup withholding tax and information reporting requirements generally apply to certain payments to certain noncorporate holders of stock. Information reporting generally will apply to payments of dividends on, and to proceeds from the sale or redemption of, shares or ADSs made within the United States to a holder of shares or ADSs (other than an exempt recipient, including a corporation, a payee that is a non-U.S. holder that provides an appropriate certification, and certain other persons).

A payor will be required to withhold backup withholding tax from any payments of dividends on, or the proceeds from the sale or redemption of, shares or ADSs within the United States to you, unless you are an exempt recipient, if you fail to furnish your correct taxpayer identification number or otherwise fail to establish an exception from backup withholding tax requirements or otherwise fail to establish an exception from backup withholding. The amount of any backup withholding from a payment to you will be allowed as a credit against your U.S. federal income tax liability and may entitle you to a refund, provided that the required information is furnished to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. The backup withholding tax rate is 28 percent for years 2004 through 2010.

In the case of payments made within the United States to a foreign simple trust, foreign grantor trust, or foreign partnership (other than payments to a foreign simple trust, foreign grantor trust, or foreign partnership that qualifies as a withholding foreign trust or withholding foreign partnership within the meaning of the applicable U.S. Treasury Regulations and payments to a foreign simple trust, foreign grantor trust, or foreign partnership that are effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the United States), the beneficiaries of the foreign simple trust, the persons treated as the owners of the foreign grantor trust or the partners of the foreign partnership, as the case may be, will be required to provide the certification discussed above in order to establish an exemption from backup withholding tax and information reporting requirements. Moreover, if you are a non-U.S. holder, a payor may rely on a certification provided by you only if the payor does not have actual knowledge or a reason to know that any information or certification stated in the certificate is incorrect.

THE ABOVE SUMMARIES ARE NOT INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE A COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF ALL TAX CONSEQUENCES RELATING TO THE OWNERSHIP OF SHARES OR ADSs. PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS OF SHARES OR ADSs SHOULD CONSULT THEIR TAX ADVISORS CONCERNING THE TAX CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATIONS.

DOCUMENTS ON DISPLAY

We are subject to the informational requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. In accordance with these requirements, we file reports and other information with the Securities and Exchange Commission. These materials, including this report and the exhibits thereto, may be inspected and copied at prescribed rates at the Commission's public reference room at 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20549. Further information on the operation of the public reference room may be obtained by calling the Commission at 1-800-SEC-0330. The Commission also maintains a web site at <http://www.sec.gov> that contains reports and other information regarding registrants that file electronically with the Commission. Our annual reports and some of the other information we submit to the Commission may be accessed through this web site. In addition, material that we file can be inspected at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange at 20 Broad Street, New York, New York 10005.