

The Draft MREL Technical Standards do not provide details on the implications of a failure by an institution to comply with its MREL requirement. However, if the approach set out by the FSB in the TLAC Principles and Term Sheet is adopted in respect of MREL, then a failure by an institution to comply with MREL would be treated in the same manner as a failure to meet minimum regulatory capital requirements. See “– Increasingly onerous capital requirements may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations” for further information.

Accordingly, any failure by the Bank and/or the Group to comply with its MREL requirement may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial conditions and results of operations and could result in the imposition of restrictions or prohibitions on discretionary payments by the Bank, including the payment of dividends. There can also be no assurance as to the relationship between the “Pillar 2” additional own funds requirements, the “combined buffer requirement”, the MREL requirement once implemented in Spain and the restrictions or prohibitions on discretionary payments.

***Increased taxation and other burdens imposed on the financial sector may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations***

On February 14, 2013, the European Commission published a proposal (the “**Commission’s Proposal**”) for a Directive for a common financial transaction tax (“**FTT**”) in Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia (the “**participating Member States**”). However, Estonia has since stated that it will not participate.

The European Commission’s Proposal has very broad scope and could, if introduced, apply to certain dealings in securities issued by the Group or other issuers (including secondary market transactions) in certain circumstances.

Under the European Commission’s Proposal the FTT could apply in certain circumstances to persons both within and outside of the participating Member States. Generally, it would apply to certain dealings in securities where at least one party is a financial institution, and at least one party is established in a participating Member State. A financial institution may be, or be deemed to be, “established” in a participating Member State in a broad range of circumstances, including (a) by transacting with a person established in a participating Member State or (b) where the financial instrument which is subject to the dealings is issued in a participating Member State.

However, the FTT proposal remains subject to negotiation among the participating Member States. It may therefore be altered prior to any implementation, the timing of which remains unclear. Additional EU Member States may decide to participate and participating Member States may decide not to participate.

Royal Decree-Law 8/2014, of July 4, introduced a 0.03% tax on bank deposits in Spain. This tax is payable annually by Spanish banks. There can be no assurance that additional national or transnational bank levies or financial transaction taxes will not be adopted by the authorities of the jurisdictions where the Bank operates.

***Contributions for assisting in the future recovery and resolution of the Spanish banking sector may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations***

In 2015, Law 11/2015 and RD 1012/2015 established a requirement for Spanish credit institutions, including the Bank, to make at least an annual ordinary contribution to the National Resolution Fund (*Fondo de Resolución Nacional*) payable on request of the FROB in addition to the annual contribution to be made to the Deposit Guarantee Fund (*Fondo de Garantía de Depósitos de Entidades de Crédito*) by member institutions. The total amount of contributions to be made to the National Resolution Fund by all Spanish banking entities must equal, at least, one per cent of the aggregate amount of all deposits guaranteed by the Deposit Guarantee Fund by December 31, 2024. The contribution will be adjusted to the risk profile of each institution in accordance with the criteria set out in RD 1012/2015. The FROB may, in addition, collect extraordinary contributions.

Furthermore, Law 11/2015 has also established in 2015 an additional charge (*tasa*) which shall be used to further fund the activities of the FROB, in its capacity as a resolution authority, which charge shall equal 2.5% of the above annual ordinary contribution to be made to the National Resolution Fund.

In addition, the Bank may need to make contributions to the EU Single Resolution Fund (the “**Fund**”), once the National Resolution Fund has been integrated into it, and will have to pay supervisory fees to the SSM. See “*Regulatory developments related to the EU fiscal and banking union may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations.*”

Any levies, taxes or funding requirements imposed on the Bank pursuant to the foregoing or otherwise in any of the jurisdictions where it operates could have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations.

***Regulatory developments related to the EU fiscal and banking union may have a material adverse effect on the Bank’s business, financial condition and results of operations***

The project of achieving a European banking union was launched in the summer of 2012. Its main goal is to resume progress towards the European single market for financial services by restoring confidence in the European banking sector and ensuring the proper functioning of monetary policy in the Eurozone.

Banking union is expected to be achieved through new harmonized banking rules (the single rulebook) and a new institutional framework with stronger systems for both banking supervision and resolution that will be managed at the European level. Its two main pillars are the SSM and the SRM.

The SSM is intended to assist in making the banking sector more transparent, unified and safer. In accordance with the SSM Regulation, the ECB fully assumed its new supervisory responsibilities within the SSM, in particular the direct supervision of the largest European banks (including the Bank), on November 4, 2014.

The SSM represents a significant change in the approach to bank supervision at a European and global level, even if it is not expected to result in any radical change in bank supervisory practices in the short term. The SSM has resulted in the direct supervision by the ECB of the largest financial institutions, including the Bank, and indirect supervision of around 3,500 financial institutions. The new supervisor is one of the largest in the world in terms of assets under supervision. In the coming years, the SSM is expected to work to establish a new supervisory culture importing best practices from the 19 supervisory authorities that form part of the SSM. Several steps have already been taken in this regard such as the publication of the Supervisory Guidelines and the creation of the SSM Framework Regulation. In addition, the SSM represents an extra cost for the financial institutions that fund it through payment of supervisory fees.

The other main pillar of the EU banking union is the SRM, the main purpose of which is to ensure a prompt and coherent resolution of failing banks in Europe at minimum cost. The SRM Regulation, which was passed on July 15, 2014, and took legal effect from January 1, 2015, establishes uniform rules and a uniform procedure for the resolution of credit institutions and certain investment firms in the framework of the SRM and the Fund. The new Single Resolution Board (the “**SRB**”) started operating on January 1, 2015 and fully assumed its resolution powers on January 1, 2016. The Fund has also been in place since January 1, 2016, funded by contributions from European banks in accordance with the methodology approved by the Council of the EU. The Fund is intended to reach a total amount of €55 billion by 2024 and to be used as a separate backstop only after an 8% bail-in of a bank’s liabilities has been applied to cover capital shortfalls (in line with the BRRD).

By allowing for the consistent application of EU banking rules through the SSM, the banking union is expected to help resume momentum towards economic and monetary union. In order to complete such union, a single deposit guarantee scheme is still needed which may require a change to the existing European treaties. This is the subject of continued negotiation by European leaders to ensure further progress is made in European fiscal, economic and political integration.

Regulations adopted towards achieving a banking and/or fiscal union in the EU and decisions adopted by the ECB in its capacity as the Bank's main supervisory authority may have a material effect on the Bank's business, financial condition and results of operations. In particular, the BRRD and Directive 2014/49/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of April 16, 2014 on deposit guarantee schemes were published in the Official Journal of the EU on June 12, 2014. The BRRD was implemented into Spanish law through Law 11/2015 and RD 1012/2015.

In addition, on January 29, 2014, the European Commission released its proposal on the structural reforms of the European banking sector that will impose new constraints on the structure of European banks. The proposal aims at ensuring the harmonization between the divergent national initiatives in Europe. It includes a prohibition on proprietary trading similar to that contained in Section 619 of the Dodd-Frank Act (also known as the Volcker Rule) and a mechanism to potentially require the separation of trading activities (including market making), such as in the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013, complex securitizations and risky derivatives.

There can be no assurance that regulatory developments related to the EU fiscal and banking union, and initiatives undertaken at the EU level, will not have a material adverse effect on the Bank's business, financial condition and results of operations.

***The Group's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism policies may be circumvented or otherwise not be sufficient to prevent all money laundering or terrorism financing***

Group companies are subject to rules and regulations regarding money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Monitoring compliance with anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing rules can put a significant financial burden on banks and other financial institutions and pose significant technical problems. Although the Group believes that its current policies and procedures are sufficient to comply with applicable rules and regulations, it cannot guarantee that its anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing policies and procedures will not be circumvented or otherwise not be sufficient to prevent all money laundering or terrorism financing. Any of such events may have severe consequences, including sanctions, fines and notably reputational consequences, which could have a material adverse effect on the Group's financial condition and results of operations.

***We are exposed to risks in relation to compliance with anti-corruption laws and regulations and economic sanctions programs.***

We are required to comply with the laws and regulations of various jurisdictions where we conduct operations. In particular, our operations are subject to various anti-corruption laws, including the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 and the United Kingdom Bribery Act of 2010, and economic sanction programs, including those administered by the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, including the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The anti-corruption laws generally prohibit providing anything of value to government officials for the purposes of obtaining or retaining business or securing any improper business advantage. As part of our business, we may deal with entities the employees of which are considered government officials. In addition, economic sanctions programs restrict our business dealings with certain sanctioned countries, individuals and entities.

Although we have internal policies and procedures designed to ensure compliance with applicable anti-corruption laws and sanctions regulations, there can be no assurance that such policies and procedures will be sufficient or that our employees, directors, officers, partners, agents and service providers will not take actions in violation of our policies and procedures (or otherwise in violation of the relevant anti-corruption laws and sanctions regulations) for which we or they may be ultimately held responsible. Violations of anti-corruption laws and

---

## [Table of Contents](#)

sanctions regulations could lead to financial penalties being imposed on us, limits being placed on our activities, our authorizations and licenses being revoked, damage to our reputation and other consequences that could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition. Further, litigations or investigations relating to alleged or suspected violations of anti-corruption laws and sanctions regulations could be costly.

### **Local regulation may have a material effect on the Bank's business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows**

The Bank's operations are subject to regulatory risks, including the effects of changes in laws, regulations, policies and interpretations, in the various jurisdictions outside Spain where it operates. Regulations in certain jurisdictions where the Bank operates differ in a number of material respects from regulations in Spain. For example, local regulations may require the Bank's subsidiaries and affiliates to meet capital requirements which are different from those applicable to the Bank as a Spanish bank, they may prohibit certain activities permitted to be undertaken by the Bank in Spain or they may require certain approvals to be obtained in connection with such subsidiaries and affiliates' activities. Changes in regulations may have a material effect on the Group's business and operations, particularly changes affecting Mexico, the United States, Venezuela, Argentina or Turkey, which are the Group's most significant jurisdictions by assets other than Spain.

Furthermore, the governments in certain regions where the Group operates, have exercised, and continue to exercise, significant influence over the local economy. Governmental actions, including changes in laws or regulations or in the interpretation of existing laws or regulations, concerning the economy and state-owned enterprises, or otherwise affecting the Group's activity, could have a significant effect on the private sector entities in general and on the Bank's subsidiaries and affiliates in particular. In addition, the Group's activities in emerging economies, such as Venezuela, are subject to a heightened risk of changes in governmental policies, including expropriation, nationalization, international ownership legislation, interest rate caps, exchange controls, government restrictions on dividends and tax policies. Any of these risks could have a material adverse effect on the Group's business, financial condition and results of operations.

### **Liquidity and Financial Risks**

***The Bank has a continuous demand for liquidity to fund its business activities. The Bank may suffer during periods of market-wide or firm-specific liquidity constraints, and liquidity may not be available to it even if its underlying business remains strong***

Liquidity and funding continue to remain a key area of focus for the Group and the industry as a whole. Like all major banks, the Group is dependent on confidence in the short- and long-term wholesale funding markets. Should the Group, due to exceptional circumstances or otherwise, be unable to continue to source sustainable funding, its ability to fund its financial obligations could be affected.

The Bank's profitability or solvency could be adversely affected if access to liquidity and funding is constrained or made more expensive for a prolonged period of time. Under extreme and unforeseen circumstances, such as the closure of financial markets and uncertainty as to the ability of a significant number of firms to ensure they can meet their liabilities as they fall due, the Group's ability to meet its financial obligations as they fall due or to fulfill its commitments to lend could be affected through limited access to liquidity (including government and central bank facilities). In such extreme circumstances the Group may not be in a position to continue to operate without additional funding support, which it may be unable to access. These factors may have a material adverse effect on the Group's solvency, including its ability to meet its regulatory minimum liquidity requirements. These risks can be exacerbated by operational factors such as an over-reliance on a particular source of funding or changes in credit ratings, as well as market-wide phenomena such as market dislocation, regulatory change or major disasters.

In addition, corporate and institutional counterparties may seek to reduce aggregate credit exposures to the Bank (or to all banks), which could increase the Group's cost of funding and limit its access to liquidity. The funding structure employed by the Group may also prove to be inefficient, thus giving rise to a level of funding cost where the cumulative costs are not sustainable over the longer term. The funding needs of the Group may increase and such increases may be material to the Group's business, financial condition and results of operations.

***Withdrawals of deposits or other sources of liquidity may make it more difficult or costly for the Group to fund its business on favorable terms or cause the Group to take other actions***

Historically, one of the Group's principal sources of funds has been savings and demand deposits. Large-denomination time deposits may, under some circumstances, such as during periods of significant interest rate-based competition for these types of deposits, be a less stable source of deposits than savings and demand deposits. The level of wholesale and retail deposits may also fluctuate due to other factors outside the Group's control, such as a loss of confidence (including as a result of political initiatives, including bail-in and/or confiscation and/or taxation of creditors' funds) or competition from investment funds or other products. The recent introduction of a national tax on outstanding deposits could be negative for the Bank's activities in Spain. Moreover, there can be no assurance that, in the event of a sudden or unexpected withdrawal of deposits or shortage of funds in the banking systems or money markets in which the Group operates, the Group will be able to maintain its current levels of funding without incurring higher funding costs or having to liquidate certain of its assets. In addition, if public sources of liquidity, such as the ECB extraordinary measures adopted in response to the financial crisis since 2008, are removed from the market, there can be no assurance that the Group will be able to maintain its current levels of funding without incurring higher funding costs or having to liquidate certain of its assets or taking additional deleverage measures.

***Implementation of internationally accepted liquidity ratios might require changes in business practices that affect the profitability of the Bank's business activities***

The liquidity coverage ratio ("LCR") is a quantitative liquidity standard developed by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision ("BCBS") to ensure that those banking organizations to which this standard is to apply have sufficient high-quality liquid assets to cover expected net cash outflows over a 30-day liquidity stress period. The final standard was announced in January 2013 by the BCBS and, since January 2015, is being phased-in until 2019. Currently the banks to which this standard applies must comply with a minimum LCR requirement of 60% and gradually increase the ratio by 10 percentage points per year to reach 100% by January 2019.

The BCBS's net stable funding ratio ("NSFR") has a time horizon of one year and has been developed to provide a sustainable maturity structure of assets and liabilities such that banks maintain a stable funding profile in relation to their on- and off-balance sheet activities that reduces the likelihood that disruptions to a bank's regular sources of funding will erode its liquidity position in a way that could increase the risk of its failure. The BCBS contemplates that the NSFR, including any revisions, will be implemented by member countries as a minimum standard by January 1, 2018, with no phase-in scheduled.

Various elements of the LCR and the NSFR, as they are implemented by national banking regulators and complied with by the Bank may cause changes that affect the profitability of business activities and require changes to certain business practices, which could expose the Bank to additional costs (including increased compliance costs) or have a material adverse effect on the Bank's business, financial condition or results of operations. These changes may also cause the Bank to invest significant management attention and resources to make any necessary changes.

***The Group's businesses are subject to inherent risks concerning borrower and counterparty credit quality which have affected and are expected to continue to affect the recoverability and value of assets on the Group's balance sheet***

The Group has exposures to many different products, counterparties and obligors and the credit quality of its exposures can have a significant effect on the Group's earnings. Adverse changes in the credit quality of the Group's borrowers and counterparties or collateral, or in their behavior or businesses, may reduce the value of the Group's assets, and materially increase the Group's write-downs and provisions for impairment losses. Credit risk can be affected by a range of factors, including an adverse economic environment, reduced consumer and/or government spending, global economic slowdown, changes in the rating of individual counterparties, the debt levels of individual contractual counterparties and the economic environment they operate in, increased unemployment, reduced asset values, increased personal or corporate insolvency levels, reduced corporate profits, changes (and the timing, quantum and pace of these changes) in interest rates, counterparty challenges to the interpretation or validity of contractual arrangements and any external factors of a legislative or regulatory nature. In recent years, the global economic crisis has driven cyclically high bad debt charges.

Non-performing or low credit quality loans have in the past and can continue to negatively affect the Bank's results of operations. The Bank cannot assure that it will be able to effectively control the level of the impaired loans in its total loan portfolio. At present, default rates are partly cushioned by low rates of interest which have improved customer affordability, but the risk remains of increased default rates as interest rates start to rise. The timing, quantum and pace of any rise is a key risk factor. All new lending is dependent on the Group's assessment of each customer's ability to pay, and there is an inherent risk that the Group has incorrectly assessed the credit quality or willingness of borrowers to pay, possibly as a result of incomplete or inaccurate disclosure by those borrowers or as a result of the inherent uncertainty that is involved in the exercise of constructing models to estimate the true risk of lending to counterparties. The Group estimates and establishes reserves for credit risks and potential credit losses inherent in its credit exposure. This process, which is critical to the Group's results and financial condition, requires difficult, subjective and complex judgments, including forecasts of how macro-economic conditions might impair the ability of borrowers to repay their loans. As is the case with any such assessments, there is always a risk that the Group will fail to adequately identify the relevant factors or that it will fail to estimate accurately the effect of these identified factors, which could have a material adverse effect on the Group's business, financial condition or results of operations.

***The Group's business is particularly vulnerable to volatility in interest rates***

The Group's results of operations are substantially dependent upon the level of its net interest income, which is the difference between interest income from interest-earning assets and interest expense on interest-bearing liabilities. Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors beyond the Group's control, including fiscal and monetary policies of governments and central banks, regulation of the financial sectors in the markets in which it operates, domestic and international economic and political conditions and other factors. Changes in market interest rates, including cases of negative reference rates, can affect the interest rates that the Group receives on its interest-earning assets differently to the rates that it pays for its interest-bearing liabilities. This may, in turn, result in a reduction of the net interest income the Group receives, which could have a material adverse effect on its results of operations.

In addition, the high proportion of loans referenced to variable interest rates makes debt service on such loans more vulnerable to changes in interest rates. In addition, a rise in interest rates could reduce the demand for credit and the Group's ability to generate credit for its clients, as well as contribute to an increase in the credit default rate. As a result of these and the above factors, significant changes or volatility in interest rates could have a material adverse effect on the Group's business, financial condition or results of operations.

***The Group has a substantial amount of commitments with personnel considered wholly unfunded due to the absence of qualifying plan assets***

The Group's commitments with personnel which are considered to be wholly unfunded are recognized under the heading "Provisions- Provisions for Pensions and Similar Obligations" in its consolidated balance sheets included in the Consolidated Financial Statements. For more information please see Note 24 to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

The Group faces liquidity risk in connection with its ability to make payments on these unfunded amounts which it seeks to mitigate, with respect to “Post-employment benefits”, by maintaining insurance contracts which were contracted with insurance companies owned by the Group. The insurance companies have recorded in their balance sheets specific assets (fixed interest deposit and bonds) assigned to the funding of these commitments. The insurance companies also manage derivatives (primarily swaps) to mitigate the interest rate risk in connection with the payments of these commitments. The Group seeks to mitigate liquidity risk with respect to “Early retirements” and “Post-employment welfare benefits” through oversight by the Assets and Liabilities Committee (“ALCO”) of the Group. The Group’s ALCO manages a specific asset portfolio to mitigate the liquidity risk resulting from the payments of these commitments. These assets are government and covered bonds which are issued at fixed interest rates with maturities matching the aforementioned commitments. The Group’s ALCO also manages derivatives (primarily swaps) to mitigate the interest rate risk in connection with the payments of these commitments. Should the Bank fail to adequately manage liquidity risk and interest rate risk either as described above or otherwise, it could have a material adverse effect on the Group’s business, financial condition, cash flows and results of operations.

***The Bank is dependent on its credit ratings and any reduction of its credit ratings could materially and adversely affect the Group’s business, financial condition and results of operations***

The Bank is rated by various credit rating agencies. The Bank’s credit ratings are an assessment by rating agencies of its ability to pay its obligations when due. Any actual or anticipated decline in the Bank’s credit ratings to below investment grade or otherwise may increase the cost of and decrease the Group’s ability to finance itself in the capital markets, secured funding markets (by affecting its ability to replace downgraded assets with better rated ones), interbank markets, through wholesale deposits or otherwise, harm its reputation, require it to replace funding lost due to the downgrade, which may include the loss of customer deposits, and make third parties less willing to transact business with the Group or otherwise materially adversely affect its business, financial condition and results of operations. Furthermore, any decline in the Bank’s credit ratings to below investment grade or otherwise could breach certain agreements or trigger additional obligations under such agreements, such as a requirement to post additional collateral, which could materially adversely affect the Group’s business, financial condition and results of operations.

***Highly-indebted households and corporations could endanger the Group’s asset quality and future revenues***

In recent years, households and businesses have reached a high level of indebtedness, particularly in Spain, which has created increased risk in the Spanish banking system. In addition, the high proportion of loans referenced to variable interest rates makes (i) debt service on such loans more vulnerable to upward movements in interest rates and (ii) the profitability of the loans more vulnerable to interest rate decreases. Highly indebted households and businesses are less likely to be able to service debt obligations as a result of adverse economic events, which could have an adverse effect on the Group’s loan portfolio and, as a result, on its financial condition and results of operations. Moreover, the increase in households’ and businesses’ indebtedness also limits their ability to incur additional debt, reducing the number of new products the Group may otherwise be able to sell to them and limiting the Group’s ability to attract new customers who satisfy its credit standards, which could have an adverse effect on the Group’s ability to achieve its growth plans.

***The Group depends in part upon dividends and other funds from subsidiaries***

Some of the Group's operations are conducted through its financial services subsidiaries. As a result, the Bank's ability to pay dividends, to the extent the Bank decides to do so, depends in part on the ability of the Group's subsidiaries to generate earnings and to pay dividends to the Bank. Payment of dividends, distributions and advances by the Group's subsidiaries will be contingent upon their earnings and business considerations and is or may be limited by legal, regulatory and contractual restrictions. For instance, the repatriation of dividends from the Group's Venezuelan and Argentinean subsidiaries have been subject to certain restrictions and there is no assurance that further restrictions will not be imposed. Additionally, the Bank's right to receive any assets of any of the Group's subsidiaries as an equity holder of such subsidiaries upon their liquidation or reorganization, will be effectively subordinated to the claims of subsidiaries' creditors, including trade creditors.

**Business and Industry Risks*****The Group faces increasing competition in its business lines***

The markets in which the Group operates are highly competitive and this trend will likely continue. In addition, the trend towards consolidation in the banking industry has created larger and stronger banks with which the Group must now compete.

The Group also faces competition from non-bank competitors, such as payment platforms, e-commerce businesses, department stores (for some credit products), automotive finance corporations, leasing companies, factoring companies, mutual funds, pension funds, insurance companies, and public debt.

There can be no assurance that this competition will not adversely affect the Group's business, financial condition, cash flows and results of operations.

***The Group faces risks related to its acquisitions and divestitures***

The Group's mergers and acquisitions activity involves divesting its interests in some businesses and strengthening other business areas through acquisitions. The Group may not complete these transactions in a timely manner, on a cost-effective basis or at all. Even though the Group reviews the companies it plans to acquire, it is generally not feasible for these reviews to be complete in all respects. As a result, the Group may assume unanticipated liabilities, or an acquisition may not perform as well as expected. In addition, transactions such as these are inherently risky because of the difficulties of integrating people, operations and technologies that may arise. There can be no assurance that any of the businesses the Group acquires can be successfully integrated or that they will perform well once integrated. Acquisitions may also lead to potential write-downs due to unforeseen business developments that may adversely affect the Group's results of operations.

The Group's results of operations could also be negatively affected by acquisition or divestiture-related charges, amortization of expenses related to intangibles and charges for impairment of long-term assets. The Group may be subject to litigation in connection with, or as a result of, acquisitions or divestitures, including claims from terminated employees, customers or third parties, and the Group may be liable for future or existing litigation and claims related to the acquired business or divestiture because either the Group is not indemnified for such claims or the indemnification is insufficient. These effects could cause the Group to incur significant expenses and could materially adversely affect its business, financial condition, cash flows and results of operations.

***The Group is party to lawsuits, tax claims and other legal proceedings***

Due to the nature of the Group's business, the Bank and its subsidiaries are involved in litigation, arbitration and regulatory proceedings in jurisdictions around the world (including proceedings on the potential retroactivity of compensation payable to customers regarding certain mortgages clauses), the financial outcome of which is



unpredictable, particularly where the claimants seek unspecified or undeterminable damages, or where the cases argue novel legal theories, involve a large number of parties or are at early stages of discovery. An adverse outcome or settlement in these proceedings could result in significant costs and may have a material adverse effect on the Group's business, financial condition, cash flows, results of operations and reputation.

In addition, responding to the demands of litigation may divert management's time and attention and financial resources. While the Group believes that it has provisioned such risks appropriately based on the opinions and advice of its legal advisors and in accordance with applicable accounting rules, it is possible that losses resulting from such risks, if proceedings are decided in whole or in part adversely to the Group, could exceed the amount of provisions made for such risks. See *"Item 8. Financial information—Consolidated Statements and Other Financial Information—Legal proceedings"* and Note 23 to the Bank's Consolidated Financial Statements for additional information on the Group's legal, regulatory and arbitration proceedings.

***The Group's ability to maintain its competitive position depends significantly on its international operations, which expose the Group to foreign exchange, political and other risks in the countries in which it operates, which could cause an adverse effect on its business, financial condition and results of operations***

The Group operates commercial banks and insurance and other financial services companies in various countries and its overall success as a global business depends upon its ability to succeed in differing economic, social and political conditions. The Group is particularly sensitive to developments in Mexico, the United States, Turkey and Argentina, which represented 13.26%, 11.53%, 11.87% and 1.03% of the Group's assets as at December 31, 2015, respectively.

The Group is confronted with different legal and regulatory requirements in many of the jurisdictions in which it operates. See *"—Legal, Regulatory and Compliance Risks—Local regulation may have a material effect on the Bank's business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows"*. These include, but are not limited to, different tax regimes and laws relating to the repatriation of funds or nationalization or expropriation of assets. The Group's international operations may also expose it to risks and challenges which its local competitors may not be required to face, such as exchange rate risk, difficulty in managing a local entity from abroad, political risk which may be particular to foreign investors and limitations on the distribution of dividends.

In addition, the Group is more exposed to emerging economies than most of its European competitors. The Group's presence in locations such as the Latin American markets or Turkey requires it to respond to rapid changes in market conditions in these countries and exposes the Group to increased risks relating to emerging markets. See *"—Macroeconomic Risks—The Group may be materially adversely affected by developments in the emerging markets where it operates"*. There can be no assurance that the Group will succeed in developing and implementing policies and strategies that are effective in each country in which it operates or that any of the foregoing factors will not have a material adverse effect on its business, financial condition and results of operations.

***The Bank is party to a shareholders' agreement with Doğuş Holding A.Ş., among other shareholders, in connection with Garanti which may affect the Bank's ability to achieve the expected benefits from its interest in Garanti***

On November 1, 2010, the Bank entered into a shareholders' agreement with Doğuş Holding A.Ş., Doğuş Nakliyat ve Ticaret A.Ş. and Doğuş Araştırma Geliştirme ve Müşavirlik Hizmetleri A.Ş. (the **"Dogus Group"**), in connection with the acquisition of its initial interest in Garanti (the **"original SHA"**). On November 19, 2014, the Bank and the Dogus Group entered into an agreement that amends and restates the original SHA and which came into force upon completion of the Bank's acquisition of an additional 14.89% interest in Garanti (the **"amended and restated SHA"**).

The amended and restated SHA allows the Bank to appoint the Chairman of Garanti's board of directors, the majority of its members and Garanti's CEO, but provides that certain reserved matters must be implemented or approved (either at a meeting of the shareholders or of the board of directors) only with the consent of each party. For example, for so long as the Dogus Group owns shares representing over 9.95% of the share capital of Garanti, the disposal or discontinuance of, or material changes to, any line of business or business entity within the Garanti group that has a value in excess of 25% of the Garanti group's total net assets in one financial year, will require the Dogus Group's consent.

If the Bank and the Dogus Group are unable to agree on such reserved matters, Garanti's business, financial condition and results of operations may be adversely affected and the Bank may fail to achieve the expected benefits from its interest in Garanti. In addition, due to the Bank's and Garanti's association with the Dogus Group, which is one of the largest Turkish conglomerates with business interests in the financial services, construction, tourism and automotive sectors, any financial reversal, negative publicity or other adverse circumstance relating to the Dogus Group could adversely affect Garanti or the Bank.

#### **Financial and Risk Reporting**

***Weaknesses or failures in the Group's internal processes, systems and security could materially adversely affect its results of operations, financial condition or prospects, and could result in reputational damage***

Operational risks, through inadequate or failed internal processes, systems (including financial reporting and risk monitoring processes) or security, or from people-related or external events, including the risk of fraud and other criminal acts carried out by Group employees or against Group companies, are present in the Group's businesses. These businesses are dependent on processing and reporting accurately and efficiently a high volume of complex transactions across numerous and diverse products and services, in different currencies and subject to a number of different legal and regulatory regimes. Any weakness in these internal processes, systems or security could have an adverse effect on the Group's results, the reporting of such results, and on the ability to deliver appropriate customer outcomes during the affected period. In addition, any breach in security of the Group's systems could disrupt its business, result in the disclosure of confidential information and create significant financial and legal exposure for the Group. Although the Group devotes significant resources to maintain and regularly update its processes and systems that are designed to protect the security of its systems, software, networks and other technology assets, there is no assurance that all of its security measures will provide absolute security. Any damage to the Group's reputation (including to customer confidence) arising from actual or perceived inadequacies, weaknesses or failures in its systems, processes or security could have a material adverse effect on its business, financial condition and results of operations.

***The financial industry is increasingly dependent on information technology systems, which may fail, may not be adequate for the tasks at hand or may no longer be available***

Banks and their activities are increasingly dependent on highly sophisticated information technology ("IT") systems. IT systems are vulnerable to a number of problems, such as software or hardware malfunctions, computer viruses, hacking and physical damage to vital IT centers. IT systems need regular upgrading and banks, including the Bank, may not be able to implement necessary upgrades on a timely basis or upgrades may fail to function as planned. Furthermore, failure to protect financial industry operations from cyber-attacks could result in the loss or compromise of customer data or other sensitive information. These threats are increasingly sophisticated and there can be no assurance that banks will be able to prevent all breaches and other attacks on its IT systems. In addition to costs that may be incurred as a result of any failure of IT systems, banks, including the Bank, could face fines from bank regulators if they fail to comply with applicable banking or reporting regulations.