

Exchange Rates

The following table shows, for the years and dates indicated, certain information concerning the rate of exchange of US dollar per Swiss franc based on exchange rate information found on Reuters Market System. The exchange rate in effect on January 25, 2011, as found on Reuters Market System, was CHF 1.00 = \$1.06.

Year ended December 31, (\$ per CHF)	Period End	Average⁽¹⁾	Low	High
2006	0.82	0.80	0.76	0.84
2007	0.88	0.83	0.80	0.91
2008	0.94	0.93	0.82	1.02
2009	0.97	0.92	0.84	1.00
2010	1.06	0.96	0.86	1.07
Month end,				
August 2010			0.95	0.98
September 2010			0.98	1.03
October 2010			1.01	1.05
November 2010			1.00	1.04
December 2010			1.00	1.07
January 2011 ⁽²⁾			1.03	1.07

(1) Represents the average of the exchange rates on the last day of each full month during the year.

(2) Through January 25, 2011.

3.B Capitalization and Indebtedness

Not applicable.

3.C Reasons for the offer and use of proceeds

Not applicable.

3.D Risk Factors

Our businesses face significant risks and uncertainties. You should carefully consider all of the information set forth in this annual report on Form 20-F and in other documents we file with or furnish to the SEC, including the following risk factors, before deciding to invest in any Novartis securities. Our business as well as our financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks, as well as other risks and uncertainties not currently known to us or not currently deemed to be material.

Risks Facing Our Business

Our Pharmaceuticals Division faces and will continue to face important patent expirations and aggressive generic competition.

Our Pharmaceuticals Division's products are generally protected by patent rights, which are intended to provide us with exclusive rights to market the patented products. However, those patent rights are of varying strengths and durations. Loss of market exclusivity for one or more important products—including the loss of exclusivity on *Diovan*, our best-selling product, which we face in the EU this year, and in the US in 2012 and in Japan in 2013—will have a material adverse effect on our results of operations.

The introduction of a generic version of a branded medicine typically results in a significant and rapid reduction in net sales for the branded product because generic manufacturers typically offer their unbranded versions at sharply lower prices. Such competition can result from the regular expiration of the term of the patent. Such competition can also result from the entry of generic versions of another medicine in the same therapeutic class as one of our drugs, or in another competing therapeutic class. In addition, generic manufacturers frequently take an aggressive approach to challenging patents, conducting so-called "launches at risk" of products that are still under legal challenge for patent infringement, before final resolution of legal proceedings.

We also rely in all aspects of our businesses on unpatented proprietary technology, know-how, trade secrets and other confidential information, which we seek to protect through various measures including confidentiality agreements with licensees, employees, third-party collaborators, or consultants who may have access to such information. If these agreements are breached, our contractual remedies may not be adequate to cover any losses.

Some of our best-selling products are expected to face significant competition beginning as early as this year due to the end of market exclusivity resulting from the expiry of patent protection.

- The patent on valsartan, the active ingredient of *Diovan/Co-Diovan/Diovan HCT* (high blood pressure), expires in the major countries of the EU during 2011, in the US in September 2012, and in Japan in 2013. In addition, the active ingredient valsartan is also used in the single-pill combination therapies *Exforge/Exforge HCT* (high blood pressure). While there is an expectation that market exclusivities for *Exforge/Exforge HCT* will remain in the EU and Japan due to regulatory exclusivities, there is a risk that the product may face generic competition in the US beginning in September 2012.
- The patent on zoledronic acid, the active ingredient in *Zometa* (cancer), as well as in *Reclast/Aclasta* (osteoporosis), will expire in 2013 in the US and in 2012 and 2013 in other major markets.
- The patent on *Femara* (cancer) will expire in 2011 in the US and in major European markets, while generic versions have already been launched in some smaller European markets.

For more information on the patent status of our Pharmaceuticals Division's products see "Item 4. Information on the Company—Item 4.B Business Overview—Pharmaceuticals—Intellectual Property" and "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 20".

Clearly, with respect to major products for which the patent terms are expiring, the loss of exclusivity of these products will have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, should we unexpectedly lose exclusivity on additional products due to patent litigation or other reasons, this will have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, both due to the loss of revenue, and the difficulties in planning for such losses.

Our research and development efforts may not succeed in bringing high-potential products to market, or to do so cost-efficiently enough, or in sufficient numbers.

Our ability to continue to grow our business and to replace sales lost due to the end of market exclusivity depends upon the success of our research and development activities in identifying, and successfully and cost-effectively developing high-potential breakthrough products that address unmet needs, are accepted by patients and physicians, and are reimbursed by payors. To accomplish this, we commit substantial effort, funds and other resources across all our divisions to research and development, both through our own dedicated resources and through various collaborations with third parties. Developing new healthcare products and bringing them to market, however, is a highly costly, lengthy and uncertain process. In spite of our significant investments, there can be no guarantee that our research and development activities will produce a sufficient number of commercially viable new products.

Using the products of our largest division as an example, the research and development process for a new pharmaceutical product can take up to 15 years, or even longer, from discovery to commercial product launch—and with a limited available patent life the longer it takes to develop a product, the less time there will be for us to recoup our development costs. New products need not only undergo intensive preclinical and clinical testing, but also must be approved by means of highly complex, lengthy and expensive approval processes which can vary from country to country. During each stage, there is a substantial risk that we will encounter serious obstacles which will further delay us and add substantial expense, or that we will not achieve our goals and, accordingly, may be forced to abandon a product in which we have invested substantial amounts of time and money. Reasons for delays may include: failure of the product candidate in preclinical studies; difficulty enrolling patients in clinical trials or delays or clinical trial holds at clinical trial sites; delays in completing formulation and other testing and work necessary to support an application for regulatory approval; adverse reactions to the product candidate or indications of other safety concerns; insufficient clinical trial data to support the safety or efficacy of the product candidate; our inability to manufacture sufficient quantities of the product candidate for development or commercialization activities in a timely and cost-efficient manner; and failure to obtain, or delays in obtaining, the required regulatory approvals for the product candidate or the facilities in which it is manufactured. In addition, FDA and other governmental health authorities have recently begun to intensify their scrutiny of pharmaceutical companies' compliance with regulations related to the development of new products, thus adding to the obstacles and costs we face in bringing new products to market.

Our Vaccines and Diagnostics Division faces challenges similar to those faced by our Pharmaceuticals Division in developing and bringing to market new vaccines. In particular, our Vaccines and Diagnostics Division has been working to fully develop and bring to market two vaccines, *Menveo* and *Bexsero*, to combat different strains of meningococcal disease in patients of a wide range of age groups. These products are the primary products in the division's pipeline. If our Vaccines and Diagnostics Division were unable to successfully develop one or both of these products, or if the partial or full approvals of either or both of these products were significantly delayed, it could have a material adverse effect on the medium to long-term success of the division, and of the Group as a whole.

In addition, our Sandoz Division has made, and expects to continue to make, significant investments in the development of biotechnology based, "biologic" medicines intended for sale as bioequivalent or "biosimilar" generic versions of currently-marketed biotechnology products. While the development of such products can be somewhat less costly and complex than the development of originator biologic medicines, to date many countries do not yet have an established legislative or regulatory pathway which would permit such products to be sold in a manner in which the biosimilar product would be readily substitutable for the originator product. Significant delays in the development of such pathways, or significant impediments that may ultimately be built into such pathways, could diminish the value of the investments that Sandoz has made, and will continue to make, in its biotechnology operations, and could have a material adverse effect on the long-term success of the Group as a whole.

If we are unable to cost-effectively maintain an adequate flow of successful new products and new indications for existing products sufficient to cover our substantial research and development costs and to replace sales lost as older products are lost to generic competition (including the significant number of important products likely to face generic competition in the near future), or are displaced by competing products or therapies, this could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations. For a description of the approval processes which must be followed to market our products, see the sections headed "Regulation" included in the descriptions of our four operating divisions under "Item 4. Information on the Company—Item 4.B Business Overview."

Increasing regulatory scrutiny of drug safety and efficacy has and is likely to continue to adversely affect us.

Following several widely publicized issues in recent years, health regulators are increasingly focusing on product safety. Recently, the Obama Administration has publicly emphasized the importance of enforcing US drug safety regulations. In addition, authorities have paid increased attention to the risk/benefit profile of pharmaceutical products with an increasing emphasis on product safety and the value-added of products. These developments have led to requests for more clinical trial data, for the inclusion of a significantly higher number of patients in clinical trials, and for more detailed analyses of the trials. As a result, the already lengthy and expensive process of obtaining regulatory approvals for pharmaceutical products has become even more challenging.

In addition, for the same reason, the post-approval regulatory burden has been increasing. Approved drugs have increasingly been subject to requirements such as risk evaluation and mitigation strategies (REMS), Risk Management Plans, comparative effectiveness studies, Health Technology Assessments and requirements to conduct post-approval Phase IV clinical trials to gather far more detailed safety and other data on products. These requirements have the effect of making the maintenance of regulatory approvals and achieving reimbursement for our products increasingly expensive, and further heightening the risk of recalls, product withdrawals, or loss of market share.

Like our industry peers, we have been required by health authorities to conduct additional clinical trials, and to submit additional analyses of our data in order to obtain product approvals. We have had REMS and other such requirements imposed as a condition of approval of our new drugs. By increasing the costs of, and causing delays in obtaining approvals—and creating a risk that safe and efficacious products will not be approved, or will be removed from the market after previously having been approved—these regulatory requirements have had, and likely will continue to have, a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Our business is increasingly affected by pressures on pricing for our products.

The growth of overall healthcare costs as a percentage of gross domestic product in many countries means that governments and payors are under intense pressure to control spending even more tightly. These pressures are particularly strong given the lingering effects of the recent global economic and financial crisis, including the ongoing debt crisis in certain countries in Europe. As a result, our businesses and the healthcare industry in general are operating in an ever more challenging environment with very significant pricing pressures. These ongoing pressures affect all of our businesses that rely on reimbursement—including Pharmaceuticals, Sandoz and Vaccines—and involve government-imposed industry-wide price reductions, mandatory pricing systems, reference pricing initiatives, an increase in imports of drugs from lower-cost countries to higher-cost countries, shifting of the payment burden to patients through higher co-payments, limiting physicians' ability to choose among competing medicines, mandatory substitution of generic drugs and growing pressure on physicians to reduce the prescribing of patented prescription medicines. Such initiatives include the 2010 enactment of healthcare reform in the US, and its forthcoming implementation.

As a result of such measures, we faced downward pricing pressures on our branded and generic drugs in many countries in 2010. For example, Greece imposed temporary price cuts of from 3-27%. Germany

increased the required rebate for certain products from 6-16%. Turkey imposed a discount on certain products of from 11-23%. And Spain imposed a discount of 7.5% on branded drugs and a discount of 25% on generic drugs.

We expect these efforts to continue in 2011 as healthcare payors around the globe—in particular government-controlled health authorities, insurance companies and managed care organizations—step up initiatives to reduce the overall cost of healthcare, restrict access to higher-priced new medicines, increase the use of generics and impose overall price cuts. For more information on price controls and on our challenging business environment see "Item 4. Information on the Company—Item 4.B Business Overview—Pharmaceuticals—Price Controls."

Failure to comply with law, and resulting legal proceedings may have a significant negative effect on our results of operations.

We are obligated to comply with the laws of the approximately 140 countries in which we operate, covering an extremely wide range of activities. To that end, we have a strong global compliance with law program in place. Nonetheless, despite our efforts, any failure to comply with law could lead to substantial liabilities that may not be covered by insurance, and could affect our business and reputation.

In particular, in recent years, there has been a trend of increasing litigation and government investigations against companies operating in the industries of which we are a part, especially in the US. A number of our subsidiaries are, and will likely continue to be, subject to various legal proceedings that arise from time to time, including proceedings regarding product liability, commercial disputes, employment and wrongful discharge, antitrust, securities, sales and marketing practices, health and safety, environmental, tax, privacy, and intellectual property matters. Such proceedings are inherently unpredictable, and large verdicts sometimes occur. As a consequence, we may in the future incur judgments or enter into settlements of claims that could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations or cash flows.

In addition, governments and regulatory authorities have been stepping up their compliance and law enforcement activities in recent years in key areas, including corruption, marketing practices, insider trading, antitrust and trade restrictions. Responding to such investigations is costly, and a significant diversion of management's attention from our business. In addition, such investigations may affect our reputation and create a risk of potential exclusion from government reimbursement programs in the US and other countries. These factors have contributed to decisions by us and other companies in our industry to enter into settlement agreements with governmental authorities around the world. Those settlements have involved and may continue to involve large cash payments, including the potential repayment of amounts allegedly obtained improperly and penalties up to treble damages. In addition, settlements of healthcare fraud cases often require companies to enter into a corporate integrity agreement, which is intended to regulate company behavior for a period of years. Also, matters underlying governmental investigations and settlements may be the subject of separate private litigation.

Our businesses have been subject, from time to time, to governmental investigations and information requests by regulatory authorities. For example, our US affiliate Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation (NPC) recently settled parallel civil and criminal investigations by the US government into allegations of potential inappropriate marketing and promotion of six Novartis drugs. As part of the settlement, NPC agreed to plead guilty to one misdemeanor, and to resolve civil charges against it, agreeing to pay a total of \$422.5 million, and to enter into a five-year Corporate Integrity Agreement.

At the same time, our Sandoz Division may, from time to time, seek approval to market a generic version of a product before the expiration of patents claimed by one of our competitors for the branded product. We do this in cases where we believe that the relevant patents are invalid, unenforceable, or would not be infringed by our generic product. As a result, affiliates of our Sandoz Division frequently face patent litigation, and in certain circumstances, we may elect to market a generic product even though

patent infringement actions are still pending. Should we elect to proceed in this manner and conduct a "launch at risk," we could face substantial damages if the final court decision is adverse to us.

Separately, the US affiliates of our Pharmaceuticals and Sandoz Divisions are the subjects of lawsuits brought by private plaintiffs and a number of state and local governments alleging that they have fraudulently overstated the Average Wholesale Price and "best price," which are, or have been, used by the US federal and state governments in the calculation of, respectively, US Medicare reimbursements and Medicaid rebates. While a Novartis affiliate was successful on appeal in one of these actions, juries have awarded plaintiffs substantial damages in three trials against Novartis affiliates to date. More trials are expected in the future.

In addition, the US affiliate of our Pharmaceuticals Division was sued by certain of its pharmaceutical sales representatives alleging that the affiliate violated wage and hour laws by failing to pay them overtime compensation. These lawsuits are part of a number of actions pending against pharmaceutical companies that challenge the industry's long-term practice of treating pharmaceutical sales representatives as salaried employees. In January 2009, the trial court held that the pharmaceutical sales representatives were not entitled to overtime pay under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and corresponding state wage and hour laws. Plaintiffs appealed the judgment to the US Court of Appeals, which vacated the judgment of the trial court in July 2010, and remanded the case to the SDNY for further proceedings. We have sought the US Supreme Court's permission to appeal the Court of Appeals' reversal of the trial court's decision. Should we fail to succeed in defeating the pharmaceutical sales representatives' suit, we would be required to comply with orders which may be disruptive and costly to our business.

Adverse judgments or settlements in any of these cases could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

For more detail regarding specific legal matters currently pending against us and provisions for such matters, see "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 20." See also "—Our reliance on third parties for the performance of key business functions heightens the risks faced by our businesses" below.

The manufacture of our products is highly regulated and complex, and may result in a variety of issues that could lead to extended supply disruptions and significant liability.

The products we market and sell are either manufactured at our own dedicated manufacturing facilities or by third parties. In either case, we must ensure that all manufacturing processes comply with current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) and other applicable regulations, as well as with our own high quality standards. The manufacture of our products is heavily regulated by governmental health authorities around the world, including the FDA, and such health authorities have recently begun to intensify their scrutiny of manufacturers' compliance with such requirements. If we or our third-party suppliers fail to comply fully with these requirements then there could be a regulatorily-required shutdown of production facilities or production lines, which in turn could lead to product shortages, or to our being entirely unable to supply product to patients for an extended duration. This, in turn, could lead to a significant loss of sales revenue. In addition, health authorities have begun to impose significant penalties for such failures to comply with cGMP. A failure to comply fully with cGMP could also lead to a delay in the approval of new products to be manufactured at the impacted site.

Like our competitors, we have faced significant manufacturing issues, and have received Warning Letters relating to such manufacturing issues. For example, in December 2010, a CIBA Vision manufacturing facility in Cidra, Puerto Rico received a Warning Letter from the FDA, primarily as a result of questions involving the testing methods used for certain contact lenses manufactured there. As a result, CIBA Vision recalled the product. An action plan is under development and will be presented to the FDA. However, there can be no guarantee of the outcome of this matter. Nor can there be any guarantee that we will not face similar such issues in the future, or that we will successfully manage such issues when they arise.

In addition to regulatory requirements, many of our products involve technically complex manufacturing processes or require a supply of highly specialized raw materials. For some products and raw materials, we may also rely on a single source of supply. As a result, the inherent fragility of certain of our production processes may cause the production of one or more of our products to be disrupted from time to time.

In particular, an increasing portion of our portfolio, including products from our Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Diagnostics, and Sandoz Divisions, are "biologic" products. Unlike traditional "small-molecule" drugs, biologic drugs cannot be manufactured synthetically, but typically must be produced from living plant or animal micro-organisms. As a result, the production of biologic drugs which meet all regulatory requirements is especially complex. Even slight deviations at any point in the production process may lead to batch failures or recalls. In addition, because the production process is based on living micro-organisms, the process could be affected by contaminants which could impact those micro-organisms. In such an event, production shutdowns and extensive and extended decontamination efforts may be required.

Finally, in addition to potential liability for government penalties, because our products are intended to promote the health of patients, for some of our products, any supply disruption, or other charges regarding production issues, could subject us to lawsuits or to allegations that the public health, or the health of individuals, has been endangered.

In sum, a disruption in the supply of certain key products—whether as a result of a failure to comply with applicable regulations, the fragility of the production process, or our failure to accurately predict demand—could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

The after-effects of the recent global economic and financial crisis may have a material adverse effect on our results.

Many of the world's largest economies and financial institutions continue to be impacted by the recent global economic and financial crisis, with some continuing to face financial difficulty, a decline in asset prices, liquidity problems and limited availability of credit. It is uncertain how long these effects will last, or whether economic and financial trends will worsen or improve. Such uncertain economic times may have a material adverse effect on our revenues, results of operations, financial condition and ability to raise capital. For example, the ongoing debt crisis in certain countries in Europe have increased pressures on those countries, and on payors in those countries to force healthcare companies to decrease the prices at which we may sell them our products. The debt crisis has also given rise to concerns that some countries may not be able to pay us for our products at all.

In addition, the varying impact of difficult economic times on the economies of different countries has impacted, and may continue to unpredictably impact, the translation of our operating results into US dollars, our reporting currency. This is particularly so given recent financial troubles in many European economies, and the resultant investor concerns about the future of the Euro. The financial and debt crises may also cause the value of our investments in our pension plans to decrease, requiring us to increase our funding of those pension plans. In addition, the financial crisis may also result in a lower return on our financial investments, and a lower value on some of our assets. Alternately, the financial crisis may result in a return to inflation, which could lead to higher interest rates, which would increase our costs of raising capital. See also "—If any of numerous key assumptions and estimates in calculating our pension plan obligations turn out to be different from our actual experience, we may be required to increase substantially our contributions to pension plans as well as our pension-related costs in the future" below, and "—Foreign exchange fluctuations may adversely affect our earnings and the value of some of our assets" below.

To the extent that the economic and financial crisis is directly affecting consumers, some of our businesses, including the business units of our Consumer Health Division, may be particularly sensitive to

declines in consumer spending. In addition, our Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Diagnostics, and Sandoz Divisions may not be immune to consumer cutbacks, particularly given the increasing requirements in certain countries that patients pay a larger contribution toward their own healthcare costs. As a result, there is a risk that consumers may cut back on prescription drugs and vaccines, as well as consumer health products, to help cope with rising costs and difficult economic times.

To the extent that the economic and financial crisis is directly affecting businesses, it may also lead to a disruption or delay in the performance of third parties on which we rely for parts of our business, including licensees and collaboration partners, distributors, clinical trial providers and suppliers of products, intermediates and other goods or services. Such disruptions or delays could have an adverse effect on our business and results of operations. See also "Our reliance on third parties for the performance of key business functions heightens the risks faced by our businesses" below.

At the same time, significant changes and volatility in the equity, credit and foreign exchange markets, in the consumer and business environment, and in the competitive landscape make it increasingly difficult for us to predict our revenues and earnings into the future. As a result, any revenue or earnings guidance or outlook which we have given or might give may be overtaken by events, or may otherwise turn out to be inaccurate. Though we endeavor to give reasonable estimates of future revenues and earnings at the time we give such guidance, under current market conditions there is a significant risk that such guidance or outlook will turn out to be, or to have been, incorrect.

Risks related to our acquisition of a majority interest in Alcon, Inc. and our proposed merger with Alcon.

On August 25, 2010, we completed our acquisition of Nestlé's remaining 52% majority stake in Alcon. This acquisition, on top of the 25% stake in Alcon which we had previously purchased from Nestlé, resulted in our becoming the 77% majority shareholder of Alcon. Afterwards, on December 15, 2010, we announced that we had entered into a definitive agreement with Alcon to merge Alcon into Novartis, subject to certain approvals and conditions, which when completed would cause Alcon to be 100% owned by Novartis and enable Alcon to become a new division of Novartis.

The merger is currently expected to be completed during the first half of 2011 and is conditional on clearance of a registration statement by the US Securities and Exchange Commission, two-thirds approval by the shareholders of each of Novartis and Alcon voting at their respective meetings and other customary closing conditions. If the merger is delayed, the timing and/or realization of the anticipated benefits and cost savings from fully integrating the businesses of Novartis and Alcon will be adversely affected, with the delay making it more difficult to maintain business and operational relationships, and relationships with key employees. Once the merger with Alcon is approved and completed, its success will depend, in part, on the combined company's ability to realize the expected benefits and cost savings and to retain and motivate its executives and key employees. See also "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 20" for information regarding pending litigation between Alcon's shareholders and Novartis.

An increasing amount of intangible assets and goodwill on our books may lead to significant impairment charges in the future.

The amount of goodwill and other intangible assets on our consolidated balance sheet has increased significantly in recent years, primarily due to acquisitions. Although no significant additional impairments are currently anticipated, impairment testing could lead to material impairment charges in the future.

We regularly review our long-lived intangible and tangible assets, including identifiable intangible assets, investments in associated companies and goodwill, for impairment. Goodwill, acquired research and development, and acquired development projects not yet ready for use are subject to impairment review at least annually. Other long-lived assets are reviewed for impairment when there is an indication that an impairment may have occurred. Impairment testing under IFRS may lead to impairment charges in the future. Any significant impairment charges could have a material adverse effect on our results of

operations. In 2010, for example, we recorded an intangible asset impairment charge of \$704 million after we decided not to pursue further development of Pharmaceuticals Division pipeline products albinterferon alfa-2b, *Mycograb* and ASA404. For a detailed discussion of how we determine whether an impairment has occurred, what factors could result in an impairment and the increasing impact of impairment charges on our results of operations, see "Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—Item 5.A Operating Results—Critical Accounting Policies and Estimates—Impairment of Long-Lived Intangible and Tangible Assets" and "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 11."

Our indebtedness could adversely affect our operations.

As of December 31, 2010 we had \$14.4 billion of non-current financial debt and \$8.6 billion of current financial debt. Our current and future debt requires us to dedicate a portion of our cash flow to service interest and principal payments and may limit our ability to engage in other transactions and otherwise places us at a competitive disadvantage to our competitors that have less debt. We may have difficulty refinancing our existing debt or incurring new debt on terms that we would consider to be commercially reasonable, if at all.

Our reliance on third parties for the performance of key business functions heightens the risks faced by our businesses.

We invest a significant amount of effort and financial resources into outsourcing and offshoring certain key business functions with third parties, including research and development collaborations, manufacturing operations, warehousing, distribution activities, certain finance functions, marketing activities, data management and others. We do not control the third parties to whom we outsource these functions, but we depend on them to achieve results which may be significant to us. If these third parties fail to meet our expectations, we may lose our investment in the collaborations and fail to receive the expected benefits. In addition, should any of these third parties fail to comply with the law in the course of their performance of services for us, there is a risk that we could be held responsible for such violations of law, as well. Any such failures by third parties could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

In particular, in many countries, including many less-developed markets, we rely heavily on third party distributors and other agents for the marketing and distribution of our products. Many of these third parties do not have internal compliance resources comparable to those within our organization. Some of these countries are plagued by corruption. If our efforts to screen our third party agents and detect cases of potential misconduct fail, we could be held responsible for the noncompliance of these third parties with applicable laws and regulations, which may have a material adverse effect on our reputation and our business, financial condition or results of operations.

We may not be able to realize the expected benefits of our significant investments in emerging growth markets.

At a time of slowing growth in sales of pharmaceuticals in industrialized countries, many emerging markets have experienced comparatively strong economies, leading to proportionally higher growth and an increasing contribution to the industry's global performance. In 2010, we generated \$4.6 billion, or approximately 10% (2009: 9%) of net sales (excluding Alcon) from our six priority emerging markets—Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Korea and Turkey—as compared with \$30.8 billion, or approximately 64% (2009: 65%) of our net sales, in the world's seven largest developed markets. However, combined net sales in the six priority emerging markets grew 12% in constant currency in 2010, compared to 8% sales growth in constant currency in the seven largest developed markets during the same period. As a result of this trend, we have been taking steps to increase our presence in these priority emerging markets and in other emerging markets. For example, we continue to expand a cross-divisional operating structure to accelerate growth in smaller emerging markets and better position the comprehensive presence of all

Novartis products in these markets. These types of markets include Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and some countries in Southeast Asia.

There is no guarantee that our efforts to expand our sales in these countries will succeed, or that these countries will continue to experience growth rates in excess of the world's largest markets. Some emerging countries may be especially vulnerable to the after-effects of the recent global financial crisis, or may have very limited resources to spend on healthcare. See "The after-effects of the recent economic and financial crisis may have a material adverse effect on our results" below. Many of these countries have a relatively limited number of persons with the skills and training suitable for employment at an enterprise such as ours. See also "An inability to attract and retain qualified personnel could adversely affect our business" below. In other emerging countries, we may be required to rely on third-party agents, which may put us at risk of liability. See also "Legal proceedings may have a significant negative effect on our results of operations" above. In addition, many of these countries have currencies that fluctuate substantially. If currencies devalue and we cannot offset the devaluations with price increases, our products may become less profitable.

For all these reasons, our sales to emerging growth markets carry significant risks. A failure to continue to expand our business in emerging growth markets could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition or results of operations.

Failure to obtain marketing exclusivity periods for new generic products, or to develop differentiated products, as well as intense competition from branded pharmaceuticals companies, may have an adverse effect on the success of our Sandoz Division.

Our Sandoz Division achieves significant revenue opportunities when it secures and maintains exclusivity periods granted for generic products in certain markets—particularly the 180-day exclusivity period granted in the US by the Hatch-Waxman Act—and when it is able to develop differentiated products with few, if any, generic competitors. Failure to obtain and maintain these market opportunities could have an adverse effect on the success of Sandoz. In addition, the division faces intense competition from branded pharmaceuticals companies, which commonly take aggressive steps to limit the availability of exclusivity periods or to reduce their value. These activities may increase the costs and risks associated with our efforts to introduce generic products and may delay or entirely prevent their introduction.

If any of numerous key assumptions and estimates in calculating our pension plan obligations turn out to be different from our actual experience, we may be required to increase substantially our contributions to pension plans as well as our pension-related costs in the future.

We sponsor pension and other post-employment benefit plans in various forms. These plans cover a significant portion of our current and former associates. We are required to make significant assumptions and estimates about future events in calculating the present value of expected future expense and liability related to these plans. These include assumptions about discount rates we apply to estimated future liabilities, expected returns on plan assets and rates of future compensation increases. In addition, our actuarial consultants provide our management with historical statistical information such as withdrawal and mortality rates in connection with these estimates. Assumptions and estimates used by Novartis may differ materially from the actual results we experience due to changing market and economic conditions (including the effects of the recent global economic and debt crisis, which, to date, have resulted in extremely low interest rates), higher or lower withdrawal rates, or longer or shorter life spans of participants, among other variables. For example, a decrease in the discount rate we apply in determining the present value of expected future obligations of one-half of one percent would have increased our year-end defined benefit obligation by \$1.1 billion. Any differences between our assumptions and estimates and our actual experience could have a material effect on our results of operations and financial condition. For more information on obligations under retirement and other post-employment benefit plans and underlying actuarial assumptions, see "Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects—

Item 5.A Operating Results—Critical Accounting Policies and Estimates—Retirement and other post-employment plans" and "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 25". See also "—The after-effects of the recent economic and financial crisis may have a material adverse effect on our results" above.

Changes in tax laws or their application could adversely affect our results of operations.

The integrated nature of our worldwide operations enables us to reduce the effective tax rate on our earnings because a portion of our earnings are taxed at more favorable rates in some jurisdictions. Changes in tax laws or their application with respect to matters such as transfer pricing, intercompany dividends, controlled corporations, and limitations on tax relief allowed on the interest on intercompany debt, could increase our effective tax rate and adversely affect our financial results.

Our OTC Business Unit faces adverse impacts from increased competition, as well as potential questions of safety and efficacy.

The OTC Business Unit of our Consumer Health Division sells over-the-counter medicines, many of which contain ingredients also sold by competitors in the OTC industry. Particularly in the US, our branded OTC products compete against "store brand" products that are made with the same active ingredients as ours. These products do not carry our trusted brand names, but they also do not carry the burden of the expensive advertising and marketing that helped to establish demand for the product. As a result, the store brand products may be sold at lower prices. In recent years, consumers have increasingly begun to purchase store brand OTC products instead of branded products. In addition, in recent years, significant questions have arisen regarding the safety, efficacy and potential for misuse of certain products sold by our OTC Business Unit and its competitors. As a result, health authorities around the world have begun to re-evaluate some important over-the-counter products, leading to restrictions on the sale of some of them and even the banning of certain products. For example, in 2010, the FDA undertook a review of one cough medicine ingredient to consider whether over-the-counter sales of the ingredient remained appropriate. While FDA has not, to date, changed the ingredient's status, further regulatory or legislative action may follow, and litigation has often followed actions such as these, particularly in the US. Additional actions and litigation regarding OTC products are possible in the future. These trends have had, and may continue to have, a significant adverse effect on the success of our OTC Business Unit. See also "—The after-effects of the recent economic and financial crisis may have a material adverse effect on our results" above.

Ongoing consolidation among our distributors may increase both the purchasing leverage of key customers and the concentration of credit risk.

Increasingly, a significant portion of our global sales are made to a relatively small number of US drug wholesalers, retail chains and other purchasing organizations. For example, our three most important customers globally are all in the US, and accounted for approximately 8%, 8% and 7%, respectively, of Group net sales in 2010. The largest trade receivables outstanding were for these three customers, amounting to 9%, 5% and 6%, respectively, of the Group's trade receivables at December 31, 2010. The trend has been toward further consolidation among our distributors, especially in the US. As a result, our distributors are gaining additional purchasing leverage, which increases the pricing pressures facing our businesses. Moreover, we are exposed to a concentration of credit risk as a result of this concentration among our customers. If one or more of our major customers experienced financial difficulties, the effect on us would be substantially greater than in the past. This could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

An inability to attract and retain qualified personnel could adversely affect our business.

We highly depend upon skilled personnel in key parts of our organization, and we invest heavily in recruiting and training qualified individuals. The loss of the service of key members of our organization—

particularly senior members of our scientific and management teams—could delay or prevent the achievement of major business objectives. In addition, the success of our research and development activities is particularly dependent on our ability to attract and retain sufficient numbers of high-quality researchers and development specialists.

Future economic growth will demand more talented associates and leaders, yet the market for talent will become increasingly competitive. Shifting demographic trends will result in fewer students, fewer graduates and fewer people entering the workforce in the Western world in the next 10 years. The supply of talent for key functional and leadership positions is decreasing, and a talent gap is clearly visible for some professions and geographies—engineers in Germany, for example. Recruitment is increasingly regional or global in specialized fields such as clinical development, biosciences, chemistry and information technology.

Emerging markets are expected to be a driving force in global growth, but in countries like Russia and China there is a limited pool of executives with the training and international experience needed to work successfully in a global organization like Novartis. Moreover, younger generations around the world have changing expectations toward careers, engagement and the integration of work in their overall lifestyles. Geographic mobility is expected to decrease, and talent in emerging countries anticipate ample career opportunities closer to home than in the past.

We face intense competition for an increasingly limited pool of qualified individuals from numerous pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, universities, governmental entities and other research institutions. As a result, we may be unable to attract and retain qualified individuals in sufficient numbers, which would have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Environmental liabilities may adversely impact our results of operations.

The environmental laws of various jurisdictions impose actual and potential obligations on us to remediate contaminated sites. While we have set aside substantial provisions for worldwide environmental liabilities, there is no guarantee that additional costs will not be incurred beyond the amounts for which we have provided in the Group consolidated financial statements. If we are required to further increase our provisions for environmental liabilities in the future, or if we fail to properly manage environmental risks, this could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. For more detail regarding environmental matters, see "Item 4.D Property, Plants and Equipment—Environmental Matters" and "Item 18. Financial Statements—note 20."

Foreign exchange fluctuations may adversely affect our earnings and the value of some of our assets.

In the past year, the US dollar, our reporting currency, has suffered significant decreases in value against other world currencies. Because a significant portion of our earnings and expenditures are in currencies other than the US dollar, these decreases have had a significant impact on our reported net sales and earnings. In 2010, 36% of our net sales were made in US dollars, 29% in euros, 8% in Japanese yen, 2% in Swiss francs and 25% in other currencies. During the same period, 34% of our expenses arose in US dollars, 27% in euros, 13% in Swiss francs, 4% in Japanese yen and 22% in other currencies. As has happened in the recent past, changes in exchange rates between the US dollar and other currencies can result in increases or decreases in our sales, costs and earnings. Fluctuations in exchange rates between the US dollar and other currencies may also affect the reported value of our assets measured in US dollars and the components of shareholders' equity. For more information on the effects of currency fluctuations on our consolidated financial statements and on how we manage currency risk, see "Item 5.A Operating Results—Effects of Currency Fluctuations" and "Item 11. Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures about Non-Product-Related Market Risk." See also "—The after-effects of the recent economic and financial crisis may have a material adverse effect on our results" above.

Significant disruptions of information technology systems or breaches of data security could adversely affect our business.

Our business is increasingly dependent on critical, complex and interdependent information technology systems, including Internet-based systems, to support business processes as well as internal and external communications. The size and complexity of our computer systems make them potentially vulnerable to breakdown, malicious intrusion and computer viruses which may result in the impairment of production and key business processes.

In addition, our systems are potentially vulnerable to data security breaches—whether by employees or others—which may expose sensitive data to unauthorized persons. Such data security breaches could lead to the loss of trade secrets or other intellectual property, or could lead to the public exposure of personal information (including sensitive personal information) of our employees, clinical trial patients, customers and others.

Such disruptions and breaches of security could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Increasing use of social media could give rise to liability or breaches of data security.

Novartis and our associates are increasingly relying on social media tools as a means of communications. To the extent that we seek as a company to use these tools as a means to communicate about our products or about the diseases our products are intended to treat, there are significant uncertainties as to either the rules that apply to such communications, or as to the interpretations that health authorities will apply to the rules that exist. As a result, despite our efforts to comply with applicable rules, there is a significant risk that our use of social media for such purposes may cause us to nonetheless be found in violation of them. In addition, because of the universal availability of social media tools, our associates may make use of them in ways that may not be sanctioned by the company, and which may give rise to liability, or which could lead to the loss of trade secrets or other intellectual property, or could lead to the public exposure of personal information (including sensitive personal information) of our employees, clinical trial patients, customers and others. In either case, such uses of social media could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Earthquakes could adversely affect our business.

Our corporate headquarters, the headquarters of our Pharmaceuticals and Consumer Health Divisions, and certain of our major Pharmaceuticals Division production facilities are located near earthquake fault lines in Basel, Switzerland. In addition, other major facilities of our Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Diagnostics, Sandoz and Consumer Health Divisions are located near major earthquake fault lines in various locations around the world. In the event of a major earthquake, we could experience business interruptions, destruction of facilities and loss of life, all of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Risks Related To Our ADSs

The price of our ADSs and the US dollar value of any dividends may be negatively affected by fluctuations in the US dollar/Swiss franc exchange rate.

Our American Depositary Shares (ADSs) trade on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in US dollars. Since the shares underlying the ADSs are listed in Switzerland on the SIX Swiss Exchange (SIX) and trade in Swiss francs, the value of the ADSs may be affected by fluctuations in the US dollar/Swiss franc exchange rate. In addition, since any dividends that we may declare will be denominated in Swiss francs, exchange rate fluctuations will affect the US dollar equivalent of dividends received by holders of ADSs. If the value of the Swiss franc decreases against the US dollar, the price at

which our ADSs trade may—and the value of the US dollar equivalent of any dividend will—decrease accordingly.

Holders of ADSs may not be able to exercise preemptive rights attached to shares underlying ADSs.

Under Swiss law, shareholders have preemptive rights to subscribe for cash for issuances of new shares on a pro rata basis. Shareholders may waive their preemptive rights in respect of any offering at a general meeting of shareholders. Preemptive rights, if not previously waived, are transferable during the subscription period relating to a particular offering of shares and may be quoted on the SIX. US holders of ADSs may not be able to exercise the preemptive rights attached to the shares underlying their ADSs unless a registration statement under the US Securities Act of 1933 is effective with respect to such rights and the related shares, or an exemption from this registration requirement is available. In deciding whether to file such a registration statement, we would evaluate the related costs and potential liabilities, as well as the benefits of enabling the exercise by ADS holders of the preemptive rights associated with the shares underlying their ADSs. We cannot guarantee that a registration statement would be filed, or, if filed, that it would be declared effective. If preemptive rights could not be exercised by an ADS holder, JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., as depositary, would, if possible, sell the holder's preemptive rights and distribute the net proceeds of the sale to the holder. If the depositary determines, in its discretion, that the rights could not be sold, the depositary might allow such rights to lapse. In either case, the interest of ADS holders in Novartis would be diluted and, if the depositary allowed rights to lapse, holders of ADSs would not realize any value from the granting of preemptive rights.