Plan Assets

Retirement-related benefit plan assets are recognized and measured at fair value. Because of the inherent uncertainty of valuations, these fair value measurements may not necessarily reflect the amounts the company could realize in current market transactions.

Investment Policies and Strategies

The investment objectives of the Qualified PPP portfolio are designed to generate returns that will enable the plan to meet its future obligations. The precise amount for which these obligations will be settled depends on future events, including the retirement dates and life expectancy of the plans' participants. The obligations are estimated using actuarial assumptions, based on the current economic environment and other pertinent factors described previously on page 131. The Qualified PPP portfolio's investment strategy balances the requirement to generate returns, using potentially higher yielding assets such as equity securities, with the need to control risk in the portfolio with less volatile assets, such as fixed-income securities. Risks include, among others, inflation, volatility in equity values and changes in interest rates that could cause the plan to become underfunded, thereby increasing its dependence on contributions from the company. To mitigate any potential concentration risk, careful consideration is given to balancing the portfolio among industry sectors, companies and geographies, taking into account interest rate sensitivity, dependence on economic growth, currency and other factors that affect investment returns. There were no significant changes to investment strategy made in 2019 and none are planned for 2020. The Qualified PPP portfolio's target allocation is 12 percent equity securities, 80 percent fixed-income securities, 4 percent real estate and 4 percent other investments.

The assets are managed by professional investment firms and investment professionals who are employees of the company. They are bound by investment mandates determined by the company's management and are measured against specific benchmarks. Among these managers, consideration is given, but not limited to, balancing security concentration, issuer concentration, investment style and reliance on particular active and passive investment strategies.

Market liquidity risks are tightly controlled, with \$4,043 million of the Qualified PPP portfolio as of December 31, 2019 invested in private market assets consisting of private equities and private real estate investments, which are less liquid than publicly traded securities. In addition, the Qualified PPP portfolio had \$1,347 million in commitments for future investments in private markets to be made over a number of years. These commitments are expected to be funded from plan assets.

Derivatives are used as an effective means to achieve investment objectives and/or as a component of the plan's risk management strategy. The primary reasons for the use of derivatives are fixed income management, including duration, interest rate management and credit exposure, cash equitization and to manage currency strategies.

Outside the U.S., the investment objectives are similar to those described previously, subject to local regulations. The weighted-average target allocation for the non-U.S. plans is 20 percent equity securities, 71 percent fixed-income securities, 3 percent real estate and 6 percent other investments, which is consistent with the allocation decisions made by the company's management. In some countries, a higher percentage allocation to fixed income is required to manage solvency and funding risks. In others, the responsibility for managing the investments typically lies with a board that may include up to 50 percent of members elected by employees and retirees. This can result in slight differences compared with the strategies previously described. Generally, these non-U.S. plans do not invest in illiquid assets and their use of derivatives is consistent with the U.S. plan and mainly for currency hedging, interest rate risk management, credit exposure and alternative investment strategies.

The company's nonpension postretirement benefit plans are underfunded or unfunded. For some plans, the company maintains a nominal, highly liquid trust fund balance to ensure timely benefit payments.