

GROUPE BRUXELLES LAMBERT
Limited Liability Company

Ordinary General Meeting of 28 April 2015

Address by the Chairman of the Board of Directors

I wish quickly trace the macro-economic environment of the financial year 2014, which was, as you will see, a good year for GBL.

In 2014, the rebound in the global economy that began in 2013 continued, but was still timid and uneven:

- Despite the first signs of a slowdown in the development of the Chinese economy, the emerging markets continued to drive growth worldwide, and particularly Asia (excluding Japan), which grew by 6.1% over the year.
- Against a backdrop of almost full employment and a still accommodative monetary policy, the United States expanded at their fastest rate since 2008, with GDP growth of 2.5%.
- European growth moved back into positive territory, but at a sluggish rate of 0.8%, with a real risk of deflation. While the economies of Southern Europe began to reap the benefit of their reforms, France, hampered by low household consumption, and Germany, affected by the geopolitical situation in Ukraine, delivered a weaker performance.

However the outlook in Europe for the coming year is optimistic, underpinned firstly by interest rates kept at floor levels by the ECB by the Euro, at its lowest compared to the Dollar since 2003, and by a record fall in the oil price, by more than 50% from its mid-year highest levels.

In this framework, GBL succeeded in further rebalancing its portfolio begun in 2012, with around EUR 7.4 billion of operations consisting primarily of acquisitions, disposals and financing transactions. The contribution from the new investments (SGS and Umicore) and the Financial Pillar (which distributed the result from the disposal of two mature assets) almost completely offset the dilutive effect of asset sales. Following the disposal of a 0.3% interest in Total in November 2013, and supported by attractive valuation levels, the group decided to monetise an additional fraction of its investment (0.6%), generating a capital gain of EUR 335 million in 2014.

GBL remained cautious with regards to acquisitions given the high valuation levels. Incubator Investments were nevertheless reinforced by GBL's further increase in the shareholding of Umicore, of which GBL became the first shareholder, with just over 13% of the share capital at end March of this year. GBL also continued to develop its Financial Pillar, notably through a new commitment into the Mérieux Développement funds, which specialise in the healthcare sector, in partnership with the Mérieux family.

Last but not least, we remained faithful to our role as professional shareholder, actively contributing to the strategic decisions made by our investments. We thus support the merger between Lafarge and Holcim to create the global leader in the construction materials industry, as well as the acquisition by Imerys of the S&B group, a global player in industrial minerals.

GBL's adjusted net assets increased in 2014, by EUR 344 million, representing a 2.3% growth, to EUR 15.3 billion, or EUR 94.58 per share. The share price gained 6%, standing at EUR 70.75 at year-end. In view of this performance, the Board of Directors therefore propose an increase of 2.6% of the gross dividend to EUR 2.79 per share, representing a return of 3.9% on the share price at the end of 2014.
