Group Chief Executive's Review

We have a diversified, universal banking business model and an integrated global network that work for our clients and deliver industry-leading returns for our investors.

Stuart Gulliver Group Chief Executive

We have made an excellent start to 2017, reflecting the changes we have made since our Investor Update in 2015 and the strength of our competitive position. Our three main global businesses performed well, generating significant increases in both reported and adjusted profit before tax, and gaining market share in many of the products that are central to our strategy. Revenue grew faster than costs on an adjusted basis compared with last year's first half, and we passed a number of major milestones on the way to completing our strategic actions.

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Our international network continues to distinguish us from our peers and we strengthened it further in the first half of the year. We received regulatory approval in June to establish HSBC Qianhai Securities Limited, which will be the first joint-venture securities company in mainland China to be majority-owned by a foreign bank. This is a landmark achievement that will increase access to China's markets for our domestic and international clients. The new business is expected to launch in December 2017, pending the granting of the necessary securities licences.

HSBC was named 'World's Best Bank' at the *Euromoney* Awards for Excellence 2017 in July. This is a fantastic endorsement of all that we have achieved in transforming HSBC since 2011, and recognises the effectiveness of our business model, the value of our network and the superior ability that these things give us to help clients achieve their international ambitions. I am grateful to all 233,000 colleagues around the world for their considerable efforts in making this possible.

Business performance

Global Banking and Markets had a strong first half with large adjusted revenue increases in the majority of businesses compared with the same period last year. Our Equities and Fixed Income businesses performed well, growing revenue and capturing market share in spite of difficult conditions at the start of the second quarter. Debt Capital Markets also gained market share in Asia, MENA and Latin America.

Retail Banking and Wealth Management adjusted revenue grew significantly, with increases across multiple business lines. In Retail Banking, our robust balance sheet and trademark capital strength continued to attract deposits, particularly in Hong Kong, with associated revenue growth supported by interest rate rises. We also increased lending in our target markets, especially Hong Kong, the UK and Mexico. Wealth management benefited from improving customer investment appetite, strong product sales across all categories, and the impact of market movements on our life insurance manufacturing businesses.

Commercial Banking adjusted revenue increased on the back of strong growth in Global Liquidity and Cash Management. This more than compensated for marginal falls in revenue in Credit and Lending, and Global Trade and Receivables Finance. While Global Trade and Receivables Finance revenue was down compared with last year's first half, it remained stable from the end of 2016 as we grew the balance sheet in Asia. We continued to capture trade finance market share in key hubs, including Hong Kong and Singapore.

Adjusted operating expenses rose slightly compared with the same period last year, as we invested more in business growth. Performance-related compensation also rose in line with increases in profit before tax. We remain on track to hit our revised cost-saving target by the end of 2017.

Adjusted loan impairment charges were lower than in the first half of 2016, mainly due to improved credit conditions in the oil and gas industry in North America.

Delivering value for our shareholders

Our common equity tier 1 ratio was 14.7% at 30 June, up from 12.1% at the same point in 2016. In the past 12 months we have paid more in dividends than any other European or American bank and returned $3.5bn to shareholders through share buy-backs. We have done this while strengthening one of the most resilient capital ratios in the industry.

Where we have excess capital, we are open to returning it to shareholders. To that end, and having received the appropriate regulatory clearances, we will execute a further share buy-back of up to $2bn in the second half of 2017. This will bring the total value of shares repurchased since August 2016 to $5.5bn.

Strategic actions

The strategic actions that we announced at our Investor Day in June 2015 have been instrumental in making HSBC a better and more profitable bank. They continue to improve our ability to increase returns and gain maximum value from our international network, and we remain on track to complete the majority of actions by the end of the year.

Targeted initiatives removed a further $29bn of RWAs from the business in the first half of 2017. Our RWA reduction programmes have extracted a total of $296bn of RWAs from the business since the start of 2015, comfortably exceeding our target. We will continue to identify and remove low-return RWAs to the end of 2017 and beyond.

'Our Global Standards programme has transformed our ability to manage financial crime risk, making the Group and its customers safer and helping us to protect the integrity of the financial system'

We remain on track to achieve around $6bn of annualised cost savings by the end of the year, in line with the revised expectations that we set at our annual results. We removed a further $0.9bn of costs in the first six months, taking the total achieved since 2015 to $4.7bn.

HSBC Mexico maintained its momentum from 2016. Higher lending balances, strong deposit growth and improved collaboration between businesses helped to generate significantly higher profits than in last year's first half. It also continued to capture market share in targeted areas, particularly consumer lending.

Our US business remains a valuable source of business for other parts of our global network, and is therefore integral to HSBC. It is off track, but continues to make important progress. The run-off of our legacy US consumer and mortgage lending portfolio has been faster than we originally projected, and is almost complete. The US business received a non-objection to its capital plan from the US Federal Reserve Board as part of the Comprehensive Capital Analysis and Review in June.

We have been granted a restricted banking licence from the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority for our UK ring-fenced bank. This is a significant achievement and an important milestone in the creation of HSBC UK. We have made good progress in establishing the IT infrastructure for HSBC UK, and have moved around 170,000 customer sterling accounts to new HSBC UK sort codes. We expect to move all remaining sterling accounts that require new HSBC UK sort codes by the end of September 2017. We are very well advanced in filling the roles that will move from London to Birmingham, and remain on track to have a fully functioning team in place for the opening of our new UK headquarters in the first quarter of 2018.

Our international network continues to drive revenue growth for the business. Revenue from transaction banking products, which rely on the strength of the network, grew relative to last year's first half, particularly in Global Liquidity and Cash Management, and Foreign Exchange. 49% of Group adjusted client revenue is now linked to our international network, up from 45% at the same point in 2016.

We continue to shift the Group's business mix towards Asia, building on our improved financial performance and strong customer acquisition in the region since June 2015. We won new mandates related to the China-led Belt and Road initiative in the first half of the year and helped connect more Chinese companies to international opportunities. We also continued to expand our product range in the Pearl River Delta, offering personal loans to existing customers and launching retail business banking in the region. We now have around a quarter of a million credit cards in circulation in mainland China following the launch of our exclusively HSBC-branded credit card in December 2016. HSBC was named 'Asia's Best Bank' at the *Euromoney* Awards for Excellence 2017.

We remain the world's leading international bank for renminbi business, and achieved a number one ranking among foreign banks for onshore bonds in the first half of the year. HSBC was appointed one of the first market makers for the new Bond Connect in mainland China's Interbank Bond Market, and we underwrote the first new bond issue under the scheme in July. We ranked number one for the sixth consecutive year in the *Asiamoney* Offshore RMB Poll 2017.

Over the past five years, our Global Standards programme has transformed our ability to manage financial crime risk, making the Group and its customers safer and helping us to protect the integrity of the financial system. We have more work to do this year to complete the programme before integrating it fully into 'business as usual' risk management practices. Combating financial crime will continue to be a high priority, and we will always look for ways to strengthen our capabilities.

Douglas Flint

Douglas Flint steps down as Group Chairman in October and retires from HSBC after 22 years' distinguished service. I am grateful to Douglas for his support since the end of 2010 as we have implemented our long-term strategy for HSBC. During that time, he has not only helped HSBC to negotiate an ever-evolving regulatory environment, but also played a leading role in helping the banking industry recast the regulatory framework in response to the global financial crisis. Douglas has a fantastic reputation around the world for his knowledge, experience and technical expertise. I am sure that he will continue to contribute all of those things for the benefit of business and wider society. He leaves with the best wishes of everyone at HSBC.

Looking forward

Our business is in good shape. We have a diversified, universal banking business model and an integrated global network that work for our clients and deliver industry-leading returns for our investors. It is run efficiently, with strict risk-weighted asset and cost discipline, and responsibly, with a robust balance sheet and a formidable capital base. We remain focused on growing the business, improving our competitive position and rewarding our shareholders.

Stuart Gulliver
Group Chief Executive
31 July 2017