

# Group Chief Executive's Review

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## Performance

We performed reasonably well in the first half in the face of considerable uncertainty. Profits were down against a strong first half of 2015, but our highly diversified, universal banking business model helped to drive growth in a number of areas. We also captured market share in many of the product categories that are central to our strategy.

We completed the sale of our Brazil business to Banco Bradesco S.A. in July. This transaction reduces Group risk-weighted assets by around \$40bn and would increase the Group's common equity tier 1 ratio from 12.1% at 30 June 2016 to 12.8%.

Global Banking and Markets weathered a large reduction in client activity in January and February, but staged a partial recovery in the second quarter. Equities and Foreign Exchange had a difficult half, but Rates performed well on the back of increased client volumes. Global Banking and Markets also achieved some of its strongest rankings for Debt

Capital Markets and Mergers and Acquisitions. Improved collaboration with Commercial Banking was cited as a major factor in the naming of HSBC as 'World's Best Investment Bank' and 'World's Best Bank for Corporates' at the *Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2016*. The citation also highlighted HSBC's diversified and differentiated business model, and described HSBC as 'one of the most joined-up firms in the industry'.

Retail Banking and Wealth Management was also affected by reduced client activity. This led to lower revenue in our Wealth businesses, albeit against last year's strong second quarter which was boosted by the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect. While the revenue environment was challenging, we were able to capture our highest ever share of the Hong Kong mutual fund market by providing the right products to help clients manage the current economic environment. Higher lending balances in Mexico and increased customer deposits in all but one region compensated partly for the reduction in revenue from Wealth Management, with positive implications for future growth.

Commercial Banking performed well on the back of targeted loan growth in the UK and Mexico, and higher client balances in Global Liquidity and Cash Management. We maintained our position as the world's number one trade finance bank, with revenue growth and market share gains in Receivables Finance and Supply Chain Finance. We are in an excellent position to capitalise when global trade starts to recover.

Global Private Banking attracted \$5bn of net new money in the first half, more than half of which came through greater collaboration with our other Global Businesses. This demonstrates the value that the Private Bank brings to our clients from across the Group and the important role it plays within our universal banking business model.

Loan impairment charges increased, mainly in the oil and gas, and metals and mining sectors, and in Brazil due to weakness in the Brazilian economy. We remain confident of our credit quality.

## Strategy

We are now more than a year into implementing our strategic actions to improve returns and gain the maximum value from our international network. We have made good progress in the most pressing areas but have further to go in others, due largely to external factors.

In the first half of the year we removed an extra \$48bn of risk-weighted assets from the business, around half of which came from Global Banking and Markets. This takes us more than 60% of the way towards our target and keeps us on track to deliver the savings we promised by the end of 2017. These savings were in addition to the \$40bn reduction from the completion of the sale of our operations in Brazil in July.

We continue to make material progress in cutting costs. In the first half of 2016 we reduced our cost base compared with the first half of 2015, in spite of inflation and continued investment in compliance, regulatory programmes and growth. We have achieved this through tight cost control, operational enhancements and better use of digital platforms, improving our service to customers in the process. We are on track to hit the top end of our \$4.5-5.0bn cost savings target range.

We are on the way to restoring profitability in our businesses in Mexico and the US. These are important businesses for the wider Group.

Having commenced the reshaping and de-risking of our Mexico operations in 2012, we have been rebuilding the business since the start of 2015. Since then, we have expanded our share of the cards, personal loans and mortgage markets, and grown our trade finance and international payments operations. As a consequence, adjusted revenues were up by 12% in Retail Banking and Wealth Management and 27% in Commercial Banking. Adjusted profits in our Mexico business were up 37% on the same period last year.

In the US, we have invested in Commercial Banking, and Global Banking and Markets to increase revenue from our network. We have also made rapid progress in cutting costs and removing wholesale risk-weighted assets. We have continued to wind down our US CML run-off portfolio quickly and efficiently, disposing of an extra \$4.7bn of legacy assets in the first half of 2016. This progress, along with further improvements in our capital planning and management processes, helped the US business to achieve a non-objection to the capital plan it submitted as part of this year's Federal Reserve Comprehensive Capital Analysis and Review ('CCAR'). This plan includes a proposed dividend payment to HSBC Holdings plc in 2017, which would be the first such payment to the Group from our US business since 2007.

Two-thirds of our adjusted profit before tax, or \$7.2bn, came from Asia in the first half of 2016, up from 62% in the same period last year. We have continued to develop our Asia businesses, particularly Asset Management and Insurance, and our operations in the ASEAN region and the Pearl River Delta. We increased revenue in all four areas compared with the same period last year and increased assets under management in Asia by 7%. We also maintained our leadership of the market for renminbi business, topping the *Asiamoney* Offshore RMB Poll for 'Best Overall Provider of Offshore RMB Products and Services' for the fifth year in a row.

There are areas where we have more to do. Our pivot to Asia depends on our ability to redeploy the capital that we have made available. While we have clearly demonstrated that we can release capital by reducing risk-weighted assets, the global slow-down has delayed the process of redistributing that capital in Asian growth markets. This will not happen until we judge it to be in the best interests of shareholders.

We are continuing to implement Global Standards throughout HSBC.

### Share buy-back

Our strong capital position and stable earnings mean that we are able to retire some of the equity that we no longer require to support the Brazil business. Having received the appropriate regulatory clearances, we will therefore execute a \$2.5bn share buy-back in the second half of the year.

### Looking forward

Following the outcome of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, there has been a period of volatility and uncertainty which is likely to continue for some time. We are actively monitoring our portfolio to quickly identify any areas of stress, however it is still too early to tell which parts may be impacted and to what extent.

While the economic environment remains difficult, the action we have taken has already put us in a far better position for when normal conditions return. HSBC is stronger, leaner and better connected than it was last June. There is much still to do, but we are making progress in all of the areas within our control. In the meantime, our balanced and diversified business model, strong liquidity and strict cost management make us highly resilient.



**Stuart Gulliver**  
Group Chief Executive  
3 August 2016