

EuroBusiness Media (EBM): AXA, a world leader in insurance and Asset Management, reports results for 2013. Henri de Castries, welcome. As Chairman & CEO of AXA, what was the performance of the group in 2013?

Henri de Castries: In 2013, I think that the numbers are showing that the performance is a high quality performance. The business is growing in all business segments, the margins have improved and this leads to operational earnings going up 18% and puts us in a situation where we can propose to the shareholders to have a dividend increase of around 13%. So this is the reflection of the efforts we have undertaken. In Property & Casualty, in Protection & Health, in Savings & Asset Management, the business has been growing steadily over the year and we have also progressed in the achievement of the key initiatives from Ambition AXA which is the middle term strategic plan of the group.

EBM: Speaking of your strategic plan, Ambition AXA, where do you stand today?

Henri de Castries: I think we stand in a pretty solid position. Of course, we still have two years to go, but the achievements of 2013 are showing us that we are on the right path. You may remember that the three key initiatives of Ambition AXA were around Acceleration, Selectivity and Efficiency. By acceleration, what we meant was penetrating new territories, especially in the emerging world and new distribution forms and systems. And there we have made notable progressions. The revenues in emerging markets have progressed 15% in 2013 and we have completed two very significant deals, one in Columbia, where we are acquiring a very sizeable insurance player and one in China, where with the acquisition of Tian Ping, we are now in a position to do some direct automobile business in China. So a good move on the Acceleration front. Same thing on the Selectivity front. By Selectivity, we meant trying to be more efficient, mostly in the mature markets or in the mature distribution systems. And there the margins have improved: combined ratio is down, new business value margin is up in the Life business and we have been managing our capital more efficiently, extracting value from the in force portfolios, we have sometimes bought out, sometimes sold, like in the US with Mony. Last, but not least, on the Efficiency front, where the middle term goal was to extract €1.5 billion until 2015, we have already made €1.2 billion of savings, we have increased the target to €1.7 billion and we are very comfortable that we will achieve this target whilst investing at the very same time in the new technologies to transform the operational model of the group. So all in all, good progress on the Ambition AXA front.

EBM: And how do you see the future?

Henri de Castries: The future is going to be both very interesting, attractive and challenging. It's going to be attractive and interesting, because the demand coming from our customers is going to go up, is going to grow, both in the emerging world and in the mature countries, because people need to be protected, they want to understand and avoid risk. So it's good for us in all our business segments. But at the very same time, it's going to be challenging, because the impact of new technologies, the impact of the evolution of consumer behaviour is going to lead us to adapt our business model to this new world. So I think we are well positioned to face it. I think we are going to start from the steps created by the success of Ambition AXA, and looking beyond, we are taking the necessary actions to prepare ourselves for these transformations and be in a position to capture the growth, which is going to exist in the businesses we are in and in the requirements from our customers.

EBM: In a fast changing environment with new challenges, such as digital transformation or cultural change, what is the message that you would like to address to your teams today?

Henri de Castries: Well, I'd like to share with them two things. First, thank them for what they have done in 2013. And second, give them a message of confidence for the future. Thanking them for 2013, as we all see, the results are high quality results and they are creating a very, very solid platform to help us address the challenges from the future. So, it's natural for me to thank them for that, without their engagement we wouldn't be there. The second part of the message is a message of confidence. Of course, there are significant challenges ahead of us, because we will need to deeply transform our business model, but they should look at this transformation effort as something positive that they will be well equipped to face, because we are doing the investments, both human and financial, to help them make that possible and at the end of the day, this is going to help us face a growing demand, which is what any business should expect or hope for. So, gratitude and confidence.

EBM: Henri de Castries, Chairman and CEO of AXA, thank you very much.

Henri de Castries: Thank you.