

EuroBusinessMedia (EBM): AXA, a world leader in insurance and asset management, reports results for the first-half of 2012. Henri de Castries, welcome. You are the Chairman and CEO of AXA, what are your main takeaways from these first-half results?

Henri de Castries: I think this first-half is showing very solid and even slightly progressing results, despite a very difficult environment. As you know, the second-half of last year was affected by a Euro crisis, which has continued to develop in the first-half, so winds were adverse. Despite that we are showing a very solid performance: 80% of the underlying earnings are coming from businesses which are not affected by the financial crisis – Property & Casualty and Health & Protection – and they are progressing nicely. On the Life and Asset Management side of the business, which is affected by the financial turmoil, the margins remain good and we are progressing in our efforts. So the overall picture for the underlying earnings is solid. If you look at the net income, the net income is below last year, but only because we don't have this year the capital gains generated by some disposals. If you look at that without these disposals, it's approximately the same level. So, solid earnings in a difficult environment and – and I think it's very important for a financial institution – an extremely solid balance sheet, as reflected by the solvency ratio levels, both under Solvency I and under Solvency II.

EBM: What is your progress report regarding your on-going strategic plan Ambition AXA?

Henri de Castries: Well, you know that the three fronts of Ambition AXA are more selectivity, more efficiency, and acceleration in some businesses. If I take these three points in reverse order, acceleration – you can see that in the business lines, in the distribution systems, or in the geographies where we have decided to put the emphasis, things are progressing well. It's true for Property & Casualty, Health & Protection, it's also true for the emerging markets where P&C revenues are progressing by 17% and Life revenues are progressing by 9%, so solid performance. We have also completed some acquisitions during this first-half, like the acquisition of the P&C activities from HSBC in Asia and in Mexico. So this is progressing well. On the efficiency front, we are generating additional savings very much in line with what Ambition AXA, is and this is helping the productivity and the earnings. And last but not least, on the selectivity front, the evolution of the business mix, the emphasis put on some business lines and some products is bearing fruit. So I think, despite a very difficult environment, we are progressing well on the fronts we had defined.

EBM: What are your priorities for the second-half of the year?

Henri de Castries Well, the priorities are to continue on the efforts we are undertaking, because I think Ambition AXA is well suited to the current environment. So we need to continue on the selectivity front, because we still can progress on the evolution of the product mix, on the evolution of the distribution systems, on the emphasis we put on certain geographies. We have to continue the efforts in terms of efficiency and one of the key elements we have to build on is the efforts we are making to digitalise the group further, because this is going to help us increase the quality of service for the clients and become more efficient in terms of costs. Last but not least, as I said, we need to accelerate in certain geographies and certain products, so it's very much work in progress, continuing to work on the key fronts which have been defined as part of Ambition AXA.

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

HC: Thank you very much.