Other corporate information

Financial instruments

Our Group is exposed to financial risk through our financial assets, financial liabilities, and policyholder liabilities. The key financial risk factors that affect us include market risk, credit risk and liquidity risk. Information on our Group's exposure to financial risk factors, and our financial risk management objectives and policies, is provided both in the Risk and Capital Management section of this Business Review and in Section C of the financial statements on pages 177 to 180.

Further information on the sensitivity of our Group's financial instruments to market risk and our use of derivatives is also provided in notes D1 to D4 and G2 and G3 of the financial statements, which are on pages 181 to 230 and pages 256 to 261 respectively.

Treasury policy

The Group operates a central treasury function, which has overall responsibility for managing our capital funding programme as well as our central cash and liquidity positions.

The aim of our capital funding programme, which includes the £5,000 million MTN programme together with the unlimited commercial paper programme, is to maintain a strong and flexible funding capacity.

Prudential UK and Prudential Corporation Asia use derivatives to reduce equity risk, interest rate and currency exposures, and to facilitate efficient investment management. In the US, Jackson uses derivatives to reduce interest rate risk, to facilitate efficient portfolio management and to match liabilities under fixed index policies.

It is Prudential's policy that derivatives are only used to hedge exposures or facilitate efficient portfolio management.

Amounts at risk are covered by cash or by corresponding assets.

Due to the geographical diversity of our businesses, we are subject to the risk of exchange rate fluctuations. Our international operations in the US and Asia generally write policies and invest in assets denominated in local currency. Although this practice limits the effect of exchange rate fluctuations on local operating results, it can lead to significant fluctuations in Prudential's consolidated financial statements upon conversion of results into pounds sterling. The currency exposure relating to the conversion of reported earnings is not separately managed, as it is not in the economic interests of the Group to do so. The impact of gains or losses on currency conversions is recorded as a component of shareholders' funds within the statement of recognised income and expense. The impact of exchange rate fluctuations in 2008 is discussed elsewhere in this financial review.

Unallocated surplus of with-profits

During 2008, the unallocated surplus, which represents the excess of assets over policyholder liabilities for the Group's with-profits funds on a statutory basis, decreased from £14.0 billion at 1 January to £8.4 billion at 31 December.

Inherited estate of Prudential Assurance

The assets of the with-profits sub-fund (WPSF) within the long-term fund of The Prudential Assurance Company Limited (PAC) are comprised of the amounts that it expects to pay out to meet its obligations to existing policyholders and an additional amount used as working capital. The amount payable over time to policyholders from the WPSF is equal to the policyholders' accumulated asset shares plus any additional payments that may be required by way of smoothing or to meet guarantees. The balance of the assets of the WPSF is called the 'inherited estate' and has accumulated over many years from various sources.

The inherited estate, as working capital, enables PAC to support with-profits business by providing the benefits associated with smoothing and guarantees, by providing investment flexibility for the fund's assets, by meeting the regulatory capital requirements that demonstrate solvency and by absorbing the costs of significant events or fundamental changes in its long-term business without affecting the bonus and investment policies. The size of the inherited estate fluctuates from year to year depending on the investment return and the extent to which it has been required to meet smoothing costs, guarantees and other events.

Our overriding priority is to maintain the long-term financial security of the WPSF and to continue delivering strong performance for the benefit of its policyholders.

Defined benefit pension schemes

The Group operates four defined benefit schemes, three in the UK, of which by far the largest is the Prudential Staff Pension Scheme (PSPS), and a small scheme in Taiwan. The level of surplus or deficit of assets over liabilities for defined benefit schemes is currently measured in three ways: the actuarial valuation, FRS 17 (for parent company and subsidiary accounting in the UK), and IAS 19 for the Group financial statements.

Defined benefit schemes in the UK are generally required to be subject to full actuarial valuation every three years to assess the appropriate level of funding for schemes having regard to their commitments. These valuations include assessments of the likely rate of return on the assets held within the separate trustee administered funds. PSPS was last actuarially valued as at 5 April 2005 and this valuation demonstrated PSPS to be 94 per cent funded, with a shortfall of actuarially determined assets to liabilities of six per cent, representing a deficit of £243 million.

As a result, changes were made to the basis of funding for PSPS with effect from that date. Deficit funding amounts designed to eliminate the actuarial deficit over a 10-year period have been and are being made. Following these changes, total contributions to PSPS for deficit funding and employer's contributions for ongoing service for current employees were expected to be of the order of £70-75 million per annum, subject to a reassessment when the subsequent valuation is completed.

In 2008 our total contributions for the year including expenses and augmentations were £79 million. Deficit funding for PSPS is apportioned in the ratio of 70/30 between the PAC life fund and shareholder-backed operations following detailed consideration in 2005 of the sourcing of previous contributions. Employer contributions for the ongoing service of current employees are apportioned in the ratio relevant to current activity. The PSPS valuation as at 5 April 2008 is currently being finalised.

In 2008, the Group adopted IFRIC 14, 'IAS 19 The Limit on a Defined Benefit Asset, Minimum Funding Requirements and their Interaction' (IFRIC 14). IFRIC 14 provides guidance on the recognition of IAS 19 surpluses in, and funding obligations for, defined benefit pension schemes. As a result of the adoption of IFRIC 14, in respect of the position at 31 December 2008, the Group has not recognised its interest in the underlying PSPS pension surplus of £615 million net of related tax relief, reflecting the difference between the market value of the scheme assets and the discounted value of the liabilities, which would have otherwise been recognised as an asset on its balance sheet under the previous policy. In addition, the Group has recognised a provision for deficit funding to 5 April 2010 of £55 million net of related tax relief in respect of PSPS. The underlying assets and liabilities of PSPS are unaffected by the adoption of IFRIC 14.

As at 31 December 2008, after the effect of the adoption of IFRIC 14, the shareholders' share of the pension liability for PSPS' deficit funding obligation and the other schemes' deficits amounted to a £61 million liability net of related tax relief. The total share attributable to the PAC with-profits fund amounted to a liability of £60 million net of related tax relief in respect of the PAC with-profits fund's share of the liability for deficit funding to 5 April 2010 on PSPS and the deficit on the smaller Scottish Amicable scheme.

Products and drivers of insurance operations' profits

Asia

The life insurance products offered by Prudential Corporation Asia include with-profits (participating) and non-participating term, whole life and endowment and unit-linked policies. To supplement our core life products we also offer health, disablement, critical illness and accident cover.

The primary focus in Asia is regular premium products that provide both savings and protection benefits.

In 2008, the new business profit mix in our Asian insurance business was derived 50 per cent from accident and health products, 40 per cent from unit-linked and 10 per cent from non-linked.

Unit-linked products combine savings with protection, with the cash value of the policy depending on the value of the underlying unitised funds. Participating products provide savings with protection where the basic sum assured can be enhanced by a profit share (or bonus) from the underlying fund as determined at the discretion of the insurer. Non-participating products offer savings with protection where the benefits are guaranteed or determined by a set of defined market-related parameters. Accident and health products provide mortality or morbidity benefits and include health, disablement, critical illness and accident cover. These products are commonly offered as supplements to main life policies, but can also be sold separately.

Policyholder and insurer share the profits from participating policies (typically in a 90:10 ratio) in the same way as with-profits business in the UK. With unit-linked products, shareholders receive the profits arising from managing the policy, its investments and the insurance risk. Policyholders within the underlying unitised fund receive investment gains. The profits from accident and health and non-participating products come from any surplus remaining after paying policy benefits.

Unit-linked products tend to have higher profits on the EEV basis of reporting than traditional non-linked products, as expenses and charges are better matched and solvency capital requirements are lower. At the end of 2008, we were offering unit-linked products in 11 of the 12 countries in Asia in which we operate, with the only exception being Thailand.

In addition to the life products described above, we offer mutual fund investment products in India, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea, Vietnam and China, thus enabling customers to participate in debt, equity and money market investments. We are also licensed in the United Arab Emirates. Prudential Corporation Asia earns a fee based on assets under management.

United States

Jackson's product offerings include variable, fixed and fixed index annuities, as well as life insurance, retail mutual funds and institutional products.

Annuities

Annuity products are long-term individual retirement products, which offer tax-deferred accumulation on the funds invested until proceeds are withdrawn from the policy.

Interest-sensitive fixed annuities are used for asset accumulation in retirement planning and for providing income in retirement and offer flexible payout options. The contract holder pays us a premium, which is credited to the contract holder's account. Periodically, interest is credited to the contract holder's account and administrative charges are deducted. We may reset the interest rate on each contract anniversary, subject to a guaranteed minimum, in line with state regulations. When the annuity matures, we either pay the contract holder the amount in the contract holder account, or begin making payments to the contract holder in the form of an immediate annuity product – similar to a UK annuity in payment.

Fixed annuity policies are subject to early surrender charges for the first six to nine years of the contract. In addition, the contract may be subject to a market value adjustment at the time of surrender. During the surrender charge period, the contract holder may cancel the contract for the surrender value. Our profits on fixed annuities come primarily from the spread between the return we earn on investments and the interest credited to the contract holder's account (net of any surrender charges or market value adjustment) less expenses. Our fixed annuities continue to be a profitable book of business, benefiting from favourable spread income in recent years. However, the continued low interest rate environment could have an impact on the fixed annuity portfolio as lower crediting rates could result in increased surrenders and lower sales as customers seek alternative investment opportunities. That said, if the recent equity market volatility has the effect of making customers more risk averse, they may view fixed annuities as an attractive alternative to variable annuities.

Fixed index annuities (formerly referred to as equity-indexed annuities) are similar to fixed annuities, in that the contract holder pays us a premium that is credited to the contract holder's account, and also in that interest is periodically credited to the contract holder's account and administrative charges deducted, as appropriate. We guarantee an annual minimum interest rate, although actual interest credited may be higher and is linked to an equity index over its indexed option period. Our profit comes from the investment income we earn and the fees charged on the contract, less the expenses incurred, which include the costs of the guarantees, and the interest credited to the contract. Fixed index annuities are subject to early surrender charges for the first five to twelve years of the contract. During the surrender charge period, the contract holder may cancel the contract for the surrender value. Fixed index annuities continue to be a profitable product, benefiting from favourable spread and the effective management of equity risk. The fixed index book provides natural offsetting equity exposure to the guarantees issued in conjunction with our variable annuity products, which allows for efficient hedging of the net equity exposure.

Variable annuities are tax-advantaged, deferred annuities where the rate of return depends upon the performance of the underlying portfolio, similar in principle to UK unit-linked products. They are also used for asset accumulation in retirement planning and to provide income in retirement. The contract holder can allocate the premiums between a variety of variable sub-accounts with a choice of fund managers and/or guaranteed fixed-rate options. As with a unit-linked fund, the contract holder's premiums allocated to the variable accounts are held separately from Jackson's general account assets. The value of the portion of the separate account allocated to variable sub-accounts fluctuates with the underlying investments. Variable annuity policies are subject to early surrender charges for the first four to seven years of the contract. During the surrender charge period, the contract holder may cancel the contract for the surrender value. We offer one variable annuity that has no surrender charges and we also offer a choice of guaranteed benefit options within our variable annuity product portfolio, which customers can elect and pay for. These options include the guaranteed minimum death benefit (GMDB), which guarantees that, upon death of the annuitant, the contract holder or beneficiary receives a minimum value regardless of past market performance. These guaranteed death benefits might be expressed as the return of original premium, the highest past anniversary value of the contract, or as the original premium accumulated at a fixed rate of interest. In addition, there are three other types of guarantee: guaranteed minimum withdrawal benefits (GMWB), guaranteed minimum accumulation benefits (GMAB) and guaranteed minimum income benefits (GMIB).

GMWBs provide a guaranteed return of the principal invested by allowing for periodic withdrawals that are limited to a maximum percentage of the initial premium. One version of the GMWBs provides for a minimum annual withdrawal amount that is guaranteed for the contract holder's life without annuitisation. GMABs generally provide a guarantee for a return of a certain amount of principal after a specified period. GMIBs provide for a minimum level of benefits upon annuitisation regardless of the value of the investments underlying the contract at the time of annuitisation. The GMIB is reinsured.

Other corporate information
continued

As the investment return on the separate account assets is attributed directly to the contract holders, Jackson's profit arises from the fees charged on the contracts, less the expenses incurred, which include the costs of guarantees. In addition to being a profitable book of business in its own right, the variable annuity book also provides an opportunity to utilise the offsetting equity risk among various lines of business cost effectively to manage our equity exposure. We believe that the internal management of equity risk, coupled with the use of external derivative instruments where necessary, continues to provide a cost-effective method of managing equity exposure. Profits in the variable annuity book of business will continue to be subject to the impact of market movements both on sales and allocations to the variable accounts and the effects of the economic hedging programme. While we hedge our risk on an economic basis, the nature and duration of the hedging instruments, which are recorded at fair value through the income statement, will fluctuate and produce some accounting volatility. We continue to believe that, on a long-term economic basis, the equity exposure remains well managed.

Life insurance

Jackson also sells several types of life insurance including term life, universal life and variable universal life. Term life provides protection for a defined period of time and a benefit that is payable to a designated beneficiary upon the insured's death. Universal life provides permanent individual life insurance for the life of the insured and includes a savings element. Variable universal life is a life insurance policy that combines death benefit protection and the important tax advantages of life insurance with the long-term growth potential of professionally managed investments. Our life insurance book has also delivered consistent profitability, driven primarily by positive mortality and persistency experience.

Institutional products

Our institutional products division markets institutional products such as traditional Guaranteed Investment Contracts (GICs), Funding Agreements and Medium Term Note (MTN) funding agreements. The institutional product offerings also include Jackson's funding agreements issued to the Federal Home Loan Bank. We distribute our institutional products directly to investors, through investment banks, or through funding agreement brokers.

Mutual funds

During 2007, we launched a line of retail mutual funds as a complement to the broad product offering. In January 2008, we added two new portfolios to our existing line-up of mutual funds. The Jackson Funds now offer seven distinct strategies, each designed to address the diversification and asset growth potential of investors as they navigate the retirement planning process.

United Kingdom

In common with other UK long-term insurance companies, Prudential UK's products are structured as either with-profits (or participating) products, or non-participating products including annuities in payment and unit-linked products. Depending on the structure, the level of shareholders' interest in the value of policies and the related profit or loss varies.

With-profits policies are supported by a with-profits sub-fund and can be single premium (for example, Prudence Bond) or regular premium (for example, certain corporate pension products).

Our primary with-profits sub-fund is part of PAC's long-term fund. The return to shareholders on virtually all our with-profits products is in the form of a statutory transfer to PAC shareholders' funds. This is analogous to a dividend from PAC's long-term fund, and is dependent upon the bonuses credited or declared on policies in that year. In this context, there are two types of bonuses – 'annual' and 'final'. Annual bonuses are declared once a year, and are determined as a prudent proportion of the long-term expected future investment return on the underlying assets. Once credited, annual bonuses are guaranteed in accordance with the terms of the particular product. In contrast, 'final' bonuses are only guaranteed until the next bonus declaration, and are primarily determined on the actual smoothed investment return achieved over the life of the policy. Prudential's with-profits policyholders currently receive 90 per cent of the distribution from the main with-profits sub-fund as bonus additions to their policies, while our shareholders receive 10 per cent as a statutory transfer.

The defined charge participating sub-fund (DCPSF) forms part of the PAC long-term fund. It is comprised of the accumulated investment content of premiums paid in respect of the defined charge participating with-profits business issued in France, the defined charge participating with-profits business reassured into PAC from Prudential International Assurance plc and Canada Life (Europe) Assurance Ltd and includes the portfolio of with-profit annuity policies acquired from Equitable Life in 2007. All profits in this fund accrue to policyholders in the DCPSF.

The profits from almost all of our new non-participating business accrue solely to shareholders. Such business is written in the non-profit sub-fund within PAC's long-term fund, or in various shareholder-owned direct or indirect subsidiaries. The most significant of these is Prudential Retirement Income Limited (PRIL), which also writes all new immediate annuities arising from vesting deferred annuity policies in the with-profits sub-fund of PAC.

There is a substantial volume of in-force non-participating business in PAC's with-profits sub-fund and that fund's wholly owned subsidiary Prudential Annuities Limited (PAL), which is closed to new business. Profits from this business accrue to the with-profits sub-fund.

Description of EEV basis reporting

Prudential's results are prepared on two accounting bases – the supplementary EEV basis, and the IFRS basis for the financial statements. Over the life of any given product, the total profit recognised will be the same under either the IFRS or the EEV basis. However, the two methods recognise the emergence of that profit in different ways, with profits emerging earlier under the EEV basis than under IFRS. This section explains how EEV differs from IFRS and why it is used.

In broad terms, IFRS profits for long-term business reflect the aggregate of statutory transfers from UK-style with-profits funds and profit on a traditional accounting basis for other long-term business. By their nature, the products sold by the life insurance industry are long-term, as insurance companies commit to service these products for many years into the future. The profit on these insurance sales is generated over this long-term period. In our view, the result under IFRS does not properly reflect the inherent value of these future profits, as it focuses instead on the amounts accruing to shareholders in the current year.

In May 2004 the CFO Forum, representing the Chief Financial Officers of 19 European insurers, published the European Embedded Value Principles, which were designed to promote transparent and consistent embedded value reporting. Key features of the principles are:

- Inclusion of an explicit allowance for the impact of options and guarantees. This typically requires stochastic calculations, under which a large number of simulations are performed that provide a representation of the future behaviour of financial markets;
- an active allowance for the combined impact of risk profile and encumbered capital in the selection of discount rates. This ensures that the risks to the emergence of shareholder cash flows are properly accounted for; and
- sufficient disclosure to enable informed investors to understand the key risks within the business and the basis of preparation of the results.

The EEV basis not only provides a good indication of the value being added by management in a given accounting period, but also demonstrates whether shareholder capital is being deployed to best effect. Indeed insurance companies in many countries use comparable bases of accounting for management purposes.

The EEV basis is a value-based method of reporting in that it reflects the change in value of the business over the accounting period. This value is called the shareholders' funds on the EEV basis which, at a given point in time, is the value of future profits expected to arise from the current book of long-term insurance business plus the net worth of the company. In determining these expected profits, we make full allowance for the risks attached to their emergence and the associated cost of capital, and take into account recent experience in assessing likely future persistency, mortality and expenses.

The change in value is typically analysed into the following components:

- The value added from new business sold during the year;
- the change in value from existing business already in place at the start of the year;
- short-term fluctuations in investment returns;
- change in the time value of cost of options and guarantees and economic assumption changes;
- other items (for example, profit from other Group operations, tax, foreign exchange, exceptional items); and
- dividends.

The value added from new business – defined as the present value of the future profits arising from new business written in the year – is a key metric that we use in the management of our business. The change in value of business in force at the start of the year demonstrates how the existing book is being managed. Together, these metrics provide our management and shareholders with valuable information about the underlying development of our business and the success or otherwise of management actions.

EEV basis results are prepared by first of all setting 'best estimate' assumptions, by product, for all relevant factors including expenses, surrender levels and mortality. Economic assumptions as to future investment returns and inflation are generally based on market data. These assumptions are used to project future cash flows. The present value of the future cash flows is then calculated using a discount rate which reflects both the time value of money and the risks associated with the cash flows. The risk discount rate is determined by adding a risk margin to the appropriate risk free rate of return. The actual outcome may differ from that projected, in which case the effect will be reflected in the experience variances for that year.

The assumptions used for the EEV basis of accounting are set out on pages 326 to 330 in the notes that accompany the supplementary EEV basis information. An indication of the sensitivity of the results to changes in key assumptions is provided on pages 352 to 354.

The publication of the EEV Principles represented a significant step towards the harmonisation of embedded value reporting in Europe. However, even with these principles and the accompanying guidance, a divergence of approaches between companies has emerged in practice. In June 2008, in an effort to improve still further the consistency and transparency of embedded value reporting, the CFO Forum published the Market Consistent Embedded Value (MCEV) Principles. However, the MCEV Principles were designed during a period of relatively stable market conditions and their application could, in the current turbulent markets, lead to misleading results. The CFO Forum is therefore currently conducting a review of the impact of turbulent market conditions on the MCEV Principles, and the results of this review may lead to changes to the published MCEV Principles or the issuance of new guidance.