

# CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

## A. Introduction

This statement is being made by Simonds Farsons Cisk plc (SFC) pursuant to Listing Rules 5.94 and 5.97 issued by the Listing Authority of the Malta Financial Services Authority and sets out the measures taken to ensure compliance with the Code of Principles of Good Corporate Governance (the Code) contained in Appendix 5.1 to Chapter 5 of the said rules. In terms of Listing Rule 5.94, SFC is obliged to prepare a report explaining how it has complied with the Code. For the purposes of the Listing Rules, SFC is hereby reporting on the extent of its adoption of the Code.

SFC acknowledges that the Code does not prescribe mandatory rules but recommends principles so as to provide proper incentives for the Board of Directors (the Board) and SFC's management to pursue objectives that are in the interests of the Company and its shareholders. Since its establishment, SFC has always adhered to generally accepted standards of good corporate governance encompassing the requirements for transparency, proper accountability and the fair treatment of shareholders. The Board of Directors has therefore endorsed the Code of principles and adopted it.

As demonstrated by the information set out in this statement, together with the information contained in the Remuneration report, SFC believes that it has, save as indicated in the section entitled Non-compliance with the Code, throughout the accounting period under review, applied the principles and complied with the provisions of the Code. In the Non-compliance section, the Board indicates and explains the instances where it has departed from or where it has not applied the Code, as allowed by the Code.

## B. Compliance with the Code

### PRINCIPLE 1: THE BOARD

The Board's role and responsibility is to provide the necessary leadership, to set strategy and to exercise good oversight and stewardship. In terms of the Memorandum of Association of SFC, the affairs of the Company are managed and administered by a Board composed of eight directors.

The Board is in regular contact with the Group Chief Executive through the Chairman in order to ensure that the Board is in receipt of timely and appropriate information in relation to the business of SFC and management performance. This enables the Board to contribute effectively to the decision making process, whilst at the same time exercising prudent and effective controls.

Directors are provided prior to each meeting with the necessary information and explanatory data as may be required by the particular item on the agenda. Comprehensive financial statements are also provided every month. The Company has its own legal advisors, both internal and external. The Directors are entitled to seek independent professional advice at any time at the Company's expense where necessary for the proper performance of their duties and responsibilities.

The Board delegates specific responsibilities to a number of committees, notably the Corporate Governance Committee, the Related Party Transactions Committee, the Audit Committee, the Board Performance Evaluation Committee, the Nomination Committee, the New Ventures/Acquisitions/Mergers Committee and the Remuneration Committee, each of which operates under formal terms of reference approved by the Board. Further detail in relation to the committees and the responsibilities of the Board is found in Principles 4 and 5 of this statement.

### PRINCIPLE 2: CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The statute of SFC provides for the Board to appoint from amongst its Directors a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman is responsible to lead the Board and set its agenda, ensure that the Directors of the Board receive precise, timely and objective information so that they can take sound decisions and effectively monitor the performance of the Company, ensure effective communication with shareholders and encourage active engagement by all members of the Board for discussion of complex or contentious issues.

The role of the Senior Management Board (SMB) is to ensure effective overall management and control of Group business and proper co-ordination of the diverse activities undertaken by the various business units and subsidiaries which make up the Group. The SMB is responsible:

1. for the formulation and implementation of policies as approved by the Board;
2. to achieve the objectives of the Group as determined by the Board and accordingly;
3. to devise and put into effect such plans and to organise, manage, direct and utilise the human resources available and all physical and other assets of the Group so as to achieve the most economically efficient use of all resources and highest possible profitability in the interest of the shareholders and all other stakeholders.

All members of the SMB itself are senior SFC executives with experience of the Group's business and proven professional ability, and each has a particular sphere of interest within his competence.

The Company's current organisational structure provides for the Group Chief Executive to chair the SMB.

The Group Chief Executive reports regularly to the Board on the business and affairs of the Group and the commercial, economic and other challenges facing it. He is also responsible to ensure that all submissions made to the Board are timely, give a true and correct picture of the issue or issues under consideration, and are of high professional standards as may be required by the subject matter concerned.

The Company has an Operations Board which discusses operational issues on a monthly basis, a Group Receivables Review Board which monitors the collection of receivables, and a Quality Board which monitors quality levels and controls. These boards are composed of executive managers of the Group. Each subsidiary has its own management structure and accounting systems and internal controls, and is governed by its own Board, whose members, are appointed by the Company and predominately, comprise SFC Directors and/or representatives of the SMB, and/or senior management of SFC.

The above arrangements provide sufficient delegation of powers to achieve effective management. The organisational structure ensures that decision making powers are spread wide enough to allow proper control and reporting systems to be in place and maintained in such a way that no one individual or small group of individuals actually has unfettered powers of decision.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD**

Each member of the Board offers core skills and experience that are relevant to the successful operation of the Company. Although relevance of skills is key, a balance between skills represented is sought through the work of the Nominations Committee to ensure that there is an appropriate mix of members with diverse backgrounds. The shareholders are aware of the importance at Board level of diversity with regard to age, gender, educational and professional backgrounds among others, and although there is no formal diversity policy, every effort is made as and whenever possible to promote enhanced diversity whilst ensuring that the Board continues to meet its role and responsibility in the best possible way.

The Board is composed of a Chairman, one Executive Director, a Non-Executive Vice-Chairman and five other Non-Executive Directors.

#### **Executive Directors**

Mr Louis A. Farrugia F.C.A. - *Chairman*  
Mr Michael Farrugia M.A. (Edin.)

#### **Non-Executive Directors**

Mr Marcantonio Stagno d'Alcontres - *Vice-Chairman*  
Marquis Marcus John Scicluna Marshall  
Dr Max Ganado LL.D.  
Mr Roderick Chalmers M.A. Div. (Edin.) F.C.A., A.T.I.I., F.C.P.A., M.I.A.  
Ms Marina Hogg  
Baroness Christiane Ramsay Pergola

The Group Chief Executive attends all Board meetings, albeit without a vote, in order to ensure his full understanding and appreciation of the Board's policy and strategy, and so that he can provide direct input to the Board's deliberations. The Board considers that the size of the Board, whilst not being large as to be unwieldy, is appropriate, taking into account the size of the Company and its operations. The combined and varied knowledge, experience and skills of the Board members provide a balance of competences that are required, and add value to the functioning of the Board and its direction to the Company.

It is in the interest of each of the three major shareholders (who are the original promoters of the Company) to nominate as directors knowledgeable, experienced and diligent persons. Apart from this, informal arrangements, which do not infringe on their rights as shareholders, exist for consultation prior to any changes in the membership of the Board, as well as to assist in the identification of suitable persons who can be nominated for election by the other shareholders at general meetings, and who can bring in an independent viewpoint and particular knowledge to the deliberations of the Board.

All Directors, other than the Chairman and Mr Michael Farrugia, are considered independent as no shareholder has a controlling interest and has no relationship with management.

The Board has taken the view that the length of service on the Board and the close family ties between Board members who undertake an executive or senior management role in the Company do not undermine any of the Directors' ability to consider appropriately the issues which are brought before the Board. Apart from possessing valuable experience and wide knowledge of the Company and its operations, the Board feels that the Directors in question are able to exercise independent judgement and are free from any relationship which can hinder their objectivity. On the other hand, the Board believes that by definition, employment with the Company renders a Director non-independent from the institution. This should not however, in any manner, detract from the non-independent Directors' ability to maintain independence of analysis, decision and action.

### **PRINCIPLES 4 AND 5: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD AND BOARD MEETINGS**

The Board meets regularly every month apart from other occasions as may be needed. Individual Directors, apart from attendance at formal Board Meetings, participate in other ad hoc meetings during the year as may be required, and are also active in Board sub-committees as mentioned further below, either to assure good corporate governance, or to contribute more effectively to the decision making process.

**Meetings held:** 15

**Members attended:**

Mr Louis A. Farrugia – <i>Chairman</i>	15
Mr Marcantonio Stagno d'Alcontres	11
Marquis Marcus John Scicluna Marshall	13
Dr Max Ganado	10
Mr Roderick Chalmers	15
Ms. Marina Hogg	15
Mr Michael Farrugia	14
Baroness Christiane Ramsay Pergola	9*

\* of which 7 meetings were attended by an alternate Director

The Board, in fulfilling this mandate within the terms of the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association, and discharging its duty of stewardship of the Company and the Group, assumes responsibility for the following:

- reviewing and approving the business plan and targets that are submitted by management, and working with management in the implementation of the business plan;
- identifying the principal business risks for the Group and overseeing the implementation and monitoring of appropriate risk management systems;
- ensuring that effective internal control and management information systems for the Group are in place;
- assessing the performance of the Group's Executive Officers, including monitoring the establishment of appropriate systems for succession planning, and for approving the compensation levels of such executive officers; and
- ensuring that the Group has in place a policy to enable it to communicate effectively with shareholders, other stakeholders and the public generally.

The Board is ultimately responsible for the Company's system of internal controls and for reviewing its effectiveness. Such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate risk to achieve business objectives, and can provide only reasonable, and not absolute, assurance against material error, losses or fraud. Through the Audit Committee, the Board reviews the effectiveness of the Company's system of internal controls, which are monitored by the Internal Audit Department.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Board regularly reviews and approves various management reports as well as annual financial plans, including capital budgets. The strategy, processes and policies adopted for implementation are regularly reviewed by the Board using key performance indicators. To assist it in fulfilling its obligations, the Board has delegated responsibility to the Chairman of the Senior Management Board.

**Board Committees**

The Board has set up the following sub-committees to assist it in the decision making process and for the purposes of good corporate governance. The actual composition of these committees are given in the Annual Report, but as stated earlier, each of the three major shareholders and the public shareholders are represented as far as possible.

**Corporate Governance Committee** is presided over by the Non-Executive Vice-Chairman. Its terms of reference are to monitor, review and ensure the best corporate practices and report thereon to the Board. Directors and senior officers who want to deal in the Company's listed securities, are obliged to give advance notice to the Board through the Chairman (or in his absence to the secretary of the Board) and records are kept accordingly.

**Related Party Transactions Committee** is presided over by a Non-Executive Director and deals with and reports to the Board on all transactions with related parties. In the case of any Director who is a related party with respect to a particular transaction, such Director does not participate in the committee's deliberation and decision on the transaction concerned.

Control mechanisms relevant to the reporting of related party transactions are in place to ensure that information is vetted and collated on a timely basis, before reporting to the Related Party Transactions Committee for independent and final review of the transactions concerned.

The **Audit Committee's** primary objective is to protect the interests of the Company's shareholders and assist the Directors in conducting their role effectively so that the Company's decision-making capability and the accuracy of its reporting and financial results are maintained at a high level at all times.

The Audit Committee is composed of the following Non-Executive Directors:

- Roderick Chalmers – *Chairman*
- Marina Hogg
- Marcus John Scicluna Marshall

The majority of the Directors on the Audit Committee are independent, Non-Executive Directors and, in the opinion of the Board, are free from any significant business, family or other relationship with the Company, its shareholders or its management that would create a conflict of interest such as to impair their judgement. Roderick Chalmers is a professional qualified accountant with competence in matters relating to accounting and auditing. The Audit Committee as a whole has extensive experience in matters relating to the Company's area of operations, and therefore has the relevant competence required under Listing Rule 5.118.

The Audit Committee also approves and reviews the internal audit plan prior to the commencement of every financial year. The Audit Committee oversees the conduct of the internal and external audits and acts to facilitate communication between the Board, management, the external auditors and the Group internal auditor.

During the year ended 31 January 2018, the Audit Committee held five meetings. Audit Committee meetings are held mainly to discuss formal reports remitted by the Group internal auditor but also to consider the external auditors' audit plan, the six-monthly financial results and the annual financial statements.