

OECD PRINCIPLES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT – NOVEMBER 2014

This document presents a draft text of the OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, which are being revised in 2014/2015 under the auspices of the OECD Corporate Governance Committee. First released in 1999 and last revised in 2004, the OECD Principles are one of the key standards for sound financial systems of the Financial Stability Board, and all Financial Stability Board members have been invited to participate in the review. The rationale for the review is to ensure the continuing high quality, relevance and usefulness of the Principles taking into account recent developments in the corporate sector and capital markets.

The Principles of Corporate Governance are a public policy instrument intended to assist governments and regulators in their efforts to evaluate and improve the legal, regulatory and institutional framework for corporate governance. They also provide guidance for stock exchanges, investors, corporations and others that have a role in the process of developing good corporate governance. The objective of the Principles is to contribute to economic efficiency, sustainable growth and financial stability.

The draft is a work in progress that has been prepared by the Secretariat of the OECD Corporate Governance Committee in order to solicit input from business and labour representatives, civil society, and other interested stakeholders. It has not been agreed by the Corporate Governance Committee and its content is without prejudice to the final text that will be agreed by the Committee and approved by the OECD Council. Other OECD Committees will also be consulted.

The “track changes” show modifications to the 2004 version of the Principles, with “double underline/strikethrough” identifying text that has been moved but not changed.

Comments can be sent by 4 January 2015 to dafca.contact@oecd.org. Comments received by that date will be published online unless otherwise requested.

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I. ENSURING THE BASIS FOR AN EFFECTIVE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The corporate governance framework should promote transparent, ~~and efficient~~ and fair markets. It should be consistent with the rule of law and ensure effective supervision and enforcement, and clearly articulate the division of responsibilities among different supervisory, regulatory and enforcement authorities.

1. ~~To ensure an effective corporate governance framework, it is necessary that an appropriate and effective~~ Effective corporate governance requires a sound legal, regulatory and institutional ~~foundation is established upon which all~~ framework that market participants can rely ~~in on when they~~ establishing their private contractual relations. This corporate governance framework typically comprises elements of legislation, regulation, self-regulatory arrangements, voluntary commitments and business practices that are the result of a country's specific circumstances, history and tradition. The desirable mix between legislation, regulation, self-regulation, voluntary standards, etc. ~~in this area~~ will therefore vary from country to country. The legislative and regulatory elements of the corporate governance framework can usefully be complemented by soft law elements based on the "comply or explain" principle such as corporate governance codes in order to allow for flexibility and address specificities of individual companies. What works well in one company, for one investor or a particular stakeholder may not necessarily be generally applicable to corporations, investors and stakeholders that operate in another context and under different circumstances. As new experiences accrue and business circumstances change, the ~~content and structure~~ different provisions of ~~this the corporate governance~~ framework should be reviewed and, when necessary, might need to be adjusted.

2. ~~Countries seeking to implement the Principles should monitor their corporate governance framework, including regulatory and listing requirements and business practices, with the objective of maintaining and strengthening its contribution to market integrity and economic performance. As part of this, it is important to take into account the interactions and complementarity between different elements of the corporate governance framework and its overall ability to promote ethical, responsible and transparent corporate governance practices. Such analysis should be viewed as an important tool in the process of developing an effective corporate governance framework. To this end, effective and continuous consultation with the public is an essential element. In some jurisdictions, this may need to be complemented by initiatives to inform companies and their stakeholders about the benefits of implementing sound corporate governance practices, that is widely regarded as good practice.~~ Moreover, in developing a corporate governance framework in each jurisdiction, national legislators and regulators should duly consider the need for, and the results from, effective international dialogue and cooperation. If these conditions are met, the corporate governance system framework is more likely to avoid over-

regulation, support the exercise of entrepreneurship and limit the risks of damaging conflicts of interest in both the private sector and in public institutions.

A. The corporate governance framework should be developed with a view to its impact on overall economic performance, market integrity and the incentives it creates for market participants and the promotion of transparent and efficient markets.

3. -The corporate form of organisation of economic activity is a powerful force for growth. The regulatory and legal environment within which corporations operate is therefore of key importance to overall economic outcomes. Policy makers also have a responsibility to put in place a framework that is flexible enough to meet the needs of corporations operating in widely different circumstances, facilitating their development of new opportunities to create value and to determine the most efficient deployment of resources. Publicly listed companies are not a homogenous group, but vary greatly. Corporate governance frameworks should in particular take into account the size of listed companies and ensure proportionality. Other factors that may call for flexibility include the company's ownership structure, geographical presence, and where it finds itself in the corporate lifecycle. To achieve this goal, Policy makers should remain focussed on ultimate economic outcomes and when considering policy options, they will need to undertake an analysis of the overall impact on key variables that affect the functioning of markets, for example in terms of such as incentive structures, the efficiency of self-regulatory systems and dealing with systemic conflicts of interest. Transparent and efficient markets serve to discipline market participants and to promote accountability.

B. The legal and regulatory requirements that affect corporate governance practices ~~in a jurisdiction~~ should be consistent with the rule of law, transparent and enforceable.

4. -If new laws and regulations are needed, such as to deal with clear cases of market imperfections, they should be designed in a way that makes them possible to implement and enforce in an efficient and even handed manner covering all parties. Consultation by government and other regulatory authorities with corporations, their representative organisations and other stakeholders, is an effective way of doing this. Mechanisms should also be established for parties to protect their rights. In order to avoid over-regulation, unenforceable laws, and unintended consequences that may impede or distort business dynamics, policy measures should be designed with a view to their overall costs and benefits.

5. ~~Such assessments should take into account the need for e~~Public authorities should have effective enforcement and sanctioning powers, including the ability of authorities to deter dishonest behaviour and help ensure sound corporate governance practices and to impose effective sanctions for violations. In addition, enforcement can also be pursued through private action, and the effective balance between public and private enforcement will vary depending upon the specific features of each jurisdiction.

6. -Corporate governance objectives are also formulated in voluntary codes and standards that do not have the status of law or regulation. While such codes play an important role in improving corporate governance arrangements, they might leave shareholders and other stakeholders with uncertainty concerning their status and implementation. When codes and principles are used as a national standard or as an explicit substitute for legal or regulatory provisions, market credibility requires that their status in terms of coverage, implementation, compliance and sanctions is clearly specified.

C. The division of responsibilities among different authorities ~~in a jurisdiction~~ should be clearly articulated and ensure that the public interest is served.

7. -Corporate governance requirements and practices are typically influenced by an array of legal domains, such as company law, securities regulation, accounting and auditing standards, insolvency law,

contract law, labour law and tax law. Under these circumstances, there is a risk that the variety of legal influences may cause unintentional overlaps and even conflicts, which may frustrate the ability to pursue key corporate governance objectives. It is important that policy-makers are aware of this risk and take measures to limit it. Effective enforcement also requires that the allocation of responsibilities for supervision, implementation and enforcement among different authorities is clearly defined so that the competencies of complementary bodies and agencies are respected and used most effectively. Potentially conflicting objectives, for example where the same institution is charged with attracting business and sanctioning violations, should be avoided or managed through clear governance provisions. Overlapping and perhaps contradictory regulations between ~~national~~ jurisdictions is also an issue that should be monitored so that no regulatory vacuum is allowed to develop (i.e. issues slipping through in which no authority has explicit responsibility) and to minimise the cost of compliance with multiple systems by corporations. When regulatory responsibilities or oversight are delegated to non-public bodies, it is desirable to explicitly assess why, and under what circumstances, such delegation is desirable.

~~When regulatory responsibilities or oversight are delegated to non-public bodies, it is desirable to explicitly assess why, and under what circumstances, such delegation is desirable. It is also essential that the governance structure of any such delegated institution be transparent and encompass the public interest.~~

D. Stock markets should be regulated in a way that supports effective corporate governance.

8. -The functioning of stock markets plays a pivotal role for the quality of corporate governance. This is where stocks and voting rights change hands and where the economic value of governance efforts is manifested. The quality of the rules and regulations that govern the functioning of stock markets is therefore a very important element of the corporate governance framework.

9. -What traditionally were called “stock exchanges” today come in a variety of shapes and forms. Most of the large stock exchanges are now profit maximising and publicly traded joint stock companies that operate in competition with other profit maximising stock exchanges and trading venues. Few stock exchanges are still public or quasi-public institutions with an explicit public function. Stock market fragmentation, the increased internationalisation and rapid development in the use of information technology for trading are additional factors that have come to reshape the stock market landscape.

10. -Regardless of the particular structure of the stock market, policy makers and regulators should assess the proper role of stock exchanges and trading venues in terms of standard setting, supervision and enforcement of corporate governance rules. Effective regulation of corporate governance requires an assessment of how different business models of stock exchanges affect their incentives and ability to carry out these functions that are sometimes costly and in many respects serve a public function.

E. Supervisory, regulatory and enforcement authorities should have the authority, integrity and resources to fulfil their duties in a professional and objective manner. Moreover, their rulings should be timely, transparent and fully explained.

11. -Supervisory, Regulatory-regulatory and enforcement responsibilities should be vested with bodies that are operationally independent and accountable in the exercise of their functions and powers, have adequate powers, proper resources, and the capacity to perform their functions and exercise their powers, including with respect to corporate governance. Many countries have addressed the issue of political independence of the securities supervisor through the creation of a formal governing body (a board, council, or commission) whose members are given fixed terms of appointment. If the appointments are staggered and made independent from the political calendar, they can further enhance independence. Where certain functions, for example in the context of takeover reviews, have been delegated to non-public

bodies, the governance structure of any such delegated institutions should be transparent and encompass the public interest. They should be able to ~~can~~ pursue their functions without conflicts of interest and ~~that~~ ~~are~~ ~~their decisions be~~ subject to judicial review. ~~As~~ ~~When~~ the number of ~~public companies~~, corporate events and the volume of disclosures increase, the resources of supervisory, regulatory and enforcement authorities may come under strain. As a result, in order to follow developments, they will have a significant demand for fully qualified staff to provide effective oversight and investigative capacity which will need to be appropriately funded. The ability to attract staff on competitive terms will enhance the quality and independence of supervision and enforcement.

F. Cross-border cooperation should be enhanced, including through bilateral and multilateral arrangements for exchange of information.

12. -High levels of cross-border ownership and trading require strong international cooperation among regulators, including through bilateral and multilateral arrangements for exchange of information. International cooperation is becoming increasingly relevant for corporate governance, notably where companies are active in many jurisdictions through both listed and unlisted entities, and seek multiple stock market listings on exchanges in different jurisdictions.

II. THE RIGHTS AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF SHAREHOLDERS AND KEY OWNERSHIP FUNCTIONS

The corporate governance framework should protect and facilitate the exercise of shareholders' rights and ensure the equitable treatment of all shareholders, including minority and foreign shareholders. All shareholders should have the opportunity to obtain effective redress for violation of their rights..

13. -Equity investors have certain property rights. For example, an equity share in a publicly traded company can be bought, sold, or transferred. An equity share also entitles the investor to participate in the profits of the corporation, with liability limited to the amount of the investment. In addition, ownership of an equity share provides a right to information about the corporation and a right to influence the corporation, primarily by participation in general shareholder meetings and by voting.

14. -As a practical matter, however, the corporation cannot be managed by shareholder referendum. The shareholding body is made up of individuals and institutions whose interests, goals, investment horizons and capabilities vary. Moreover, the corporation's management must be able to take business decisions rapidly. In light of these realities and the complexity of managing the corporation's affairs in fast moving and ever changing markets, shareholders are not expected to assume responsibility for managing corporate activities. The responsibility for corporate strategy and operations is typically placed in the hands of the board and a management team that is selected, motivated and, when necessary, replaced by the board.

15. -Shareholders' rights to influence the corporation centre on certain fundamental issues, such as the election of board members, or other means of influencing the composition of the board, amendments to the company's organic documents, approval of extraordinary transactions, and other basic issues as specified in company law and internal company statutes. This Section can be seen as a statement of the most basic rights of shareholders, which are recognised by law in ~~virtually all OECD~~most countries. Additional rights such as the approval or election of auditors, direct nomination of board members, the ability to pledge shares, the approval of distributions of profits, shareholder ability to vote on board member and key executive compensation, approval of material related-party transactions etc and others; can be found have also been established in various jurisdictions.

16. -Investors' confidence that the capital they provide will be protected from misuse or misappropriation by corporate managers, board members or controlling shareholders is an important factor in the development and proper functioning of capital markets. Corporate boards, managers and controlling shareholders may have the opportunity to engage in activities that ~~may~~advance their own interests at the expense of non-controlling shareholders. In providing protection to investors, a distinction can usefully be made between *ex-ante* and *ex-post* shareholder rights. *Ex-ante* rights are, for example, pre-emptive rights and qualified majorities for certain decisions. *Ex-post* rights allow the seeking of redress once rights have been violated. In jurisdictions where the enforcement of the legal and regulatory framework is weak, ~~some countries have found~~ it can be desirable to strengthen the *ex-ante* rights of shareholders such as by low share ownership thresholds for placing items on the agenda of the shareholders meeting or by requiring a supermajority of shareholders for certain important decisions. The Principles support equal treatment for foreign and domestic shareholders in corporate governance. They do not address government policies to regulate foreign direct investment.

17. -One of the ways in which shareholders can enforce their rights is to be able to initiate legal and administrative proceedings against management and board members. Experience has shown that an important determinant of the degree to which shareholder rights are protected is whether effective methods

exist to obtain redress for grievances at a reasonable cost and without excessive delay. The confidence of minority investors is enhanced when the legal system provides mechanisms for minority shareholders to bring lawsuits when they have reasonable grounds to believe that their rights have been violated. The provision of such enforcement mechanisms is a key responsibility of legislators and regulators.

18. -There is some risk that a legal system, which enables any investor to challenge corporate activity in the courts, can become prone to excessive litigation. Thus, many legal systems have introduced provisions to protect management and board members against litigation abuse in the form of tests for the sufficiency of shareholder complaints, so-called safe harbours for management and board member actions (such as the business judgement rule) as well as safe harbours for the disclosure of information. In the end, a balance must be struck between allowing investors to seek remedies for infringement of ownership rights and avoiding excessive litigation. Many countries have found that alternative adjudication procedures, such as administrative hearings or arbitration procedures organised by the securities regulators or other regulatory bodies, are an efficient method for dispute settlement, at least at the first instance level. Specialised court procedures can also be a practical instrument to obtain timely injunctions, and ultimately facilitate the rapid settlement of disputes.

A. Basic shareholder rights should include the right to: 1) secure methods of ownership registration; 2) convey or transfer shares; 3) obtain relevant and material information on the corporation on a timely and regular basis; 4) participate and vote in general shareholder meetings; 5) elect and remove members of the board; and 6) share in the profits of the corporation.

B. Shareholders should be sufficiently informed about, and have the right to approve or participate in, ~~and to be sufficiently informed on~~, decisions concerning fundamental corporate changes such as: 1) amendments to the statutes, or articles of incorporation or similar governing documents of the company; 2) the authorisation of additional shares; and 3) extraordinary transactions, including the transfer of all or substantially all assets, that in effect result in the sale of the company.

19. -The ability of companies to form partnerships and related companies and to transfer operational assets, cash flow rights and other rights and obligations to them is important for business flexibility and for delegating accountability in complex organisations. It also allows a company to divest itself of operational assets and to become only a holding company. However, without appropriate checks and balances such possibilities may also be abused.

C. Shareholders should have the opportunity to participate effectively and vote in general shareholder meetings and should be informed of the rules, including voting procedures, that govern general shareholder meetings:

- 1. Shareholders should be furnished with sufficient and timely information concerning the date, location and agenda of general meetings, as well as full and timely information regarding the issues to be decided at the meeting.**
- 2. Processes and procedures for general shareholder meetings should allow for equitable treatment of all shareholders. Company procedures should not make it unduly difficult or expensive to cast votes.**

20. - The right to participate in general shareholder meetings is a fundamental shareholder right. Management and controlling investors have at times sought to discourage non-controlling or foreign investors from trying to influence the direction of the company. Some companies have charged fees for

voting. Other impediments included prohibitions on proxy voting ~~and~~, the requirement of personal attendance at general shareholder meetings to vote, holding the meeting in a remote location, and voting by show of hands. Still other procedures may make it practically impossible to exercise ownership rights. Proxy-Voting materials may be sent too close to the time of general shareholder meetings to allow investors adequate time for reflection and consultation. Many companies ~~in OECD countries~~ are seeking to develop better channels of communication and decision-making with shareholders. Efforts by companies to remove artificial barriers to participation in general meetings are encouraged and the corporate governance framework should facilitate the use of electronic voting in absentia, including the electronic distribution of proxy materials. In jurisdictions where private enforcement is weak, regulators should be in a position to curb unfair voting practices.

3. Shareholders should have the opportunity to ask questions to the board, including questions relating to the annual external audit, to place items on the agenda of general meetings, and to propose resolutions, subject to reasonable limitations.

21. -In order to encourage shareholder participation in general meetings, many jurisdictions~~some companies~~ have improved the ability of shareholders to place items on the agenda by through a simplifying simple and clear the process of filing amendments and resolutions, and ~~Improvements have also been made in order to make it easier for shareholders~~ to submit questions in advance of the general meeting and to obtain replies from management and board members. Shareholders should also be able to ask questions relating to the external audit report. Companies are justified in assuring that abuses of such opportunities do not occur. It is reasonable, for example, to require that in order for shareholder resolutions to be placed on the agenda, they need to be supported by shareholders holding a specified market value or percentage of shares or voting rights. This threshold should be determined taking into account the degree of ownership concentration, in order to ensure that minority shareholders are not effectively prevented from putting any items on the agenda. Shareholder resolutions that are approved and fall within the competence of the shareholders' meeting should be addressed by the board.

4. Effective shareholder participation in key corporate governance decisions, such as the nomination and election of board members, should be facilitated. Shareholders should be able to make their views known, including through votes at annual shareholder meetings, on the remuneration ~~policy for~~ board members and key executives. The equity component of compensation schemes for board members and employees should be subject to shareholder approval.

22. -To elect the members of the board is a basic shareholder right. For the election process to be effective, shareholders should be able to participate in the nomination of board members and vote on individual nominees or on different lists of them. To this end, shareholders should have access ~~in a number of countries~~ to the company's proxy-voting materials which are sent to shareholders, ~~although sometimes~~ subject to conditions to prevent abuse. With respect to nomination of candidates, boards in many companies have established nomination committees to ensure proper compliance with established nomination procedures and to facilitate and coordinate the search for a balanced and qualified board. It is ~~increasingly~~ regarded as good practice ~~in many countries~~ for independent board members to have a key role on this committee. To further improve the selection process, the Principles also call for full and timely disclosure of the experience and background of candidates for the board and the nomination process, which will allow an informed assessment of the abilities and suitability of each candidate. It is increasingly considered good practice to also disclose information about any other board positions that nominees hold or for which they have been nominated.

23. -The Principles call for the disclosure of remuneration ~~policy by the~~ board members and key executives. In particular, it is important for shareholders to know the remuneration policy as well as the

~~total value of compensation arrangements made pursuant to this policy. Shareholders also have an interest in specific link between~~ how remuneration and company performance are linked when they assess the capability of the board and the qualities they should seek in nominees for the board. ~~Although board and executive contracts are not an appropriate subject for approval by the general meeting of shareholders, there should be a means by which they can express their views. Several countries have introduced~~ The different forms of say-on-pay (binding or an advisory vote, ex-ante and/or ex-post, board members and/or key executives covered) play an important role in ~~which conveys~~ conveying the strength and tone of shareholder sentiment to the board without endangering employment contracts. In the case of equity-based schemes, their potential to dilute shareholders' capital and to powerfully determine managerial incentives means that they should be approved by shareholders, either for individuals or for the policy of the scheme as a whole. Shareholder approval should also be required for ~~In an increasing number of jurisdictions, any material changes to existing schemes~~ must also be approved.

5. Shareholders should be able to vote in person or in absentia, and equal effect should be given to votes whether cast in person or in absentia.

24. -The Principles recommend that voting by proxy be generally accepted. Indeed, it is important to the promotion and protection of shareholder rights that investors can place reliance upon directed proxy voting. The corporate governance framework should ensure that proxies are voted in accordance with the direction of the proxy holder ~~and that disclosure is provided in relation to how undirected proxies will be voted.~~ In those jurisdictions where companies are allowed to obtain proxies, it is important to disclose how the Chairperson of the meeting (as the usual recipient of shareholder proxies obtained by the company) will exercise the voting rights attaching to undirected proxies. Where proxies are held by the board or management for company pension funds and for employee stock ownership plans, the directions for voting should be disclosed. It is regarded as good practice that treasury shares and shares of the company held by subsidiaries should not be allowed to vote, nor be counted for quorum purposes. The objective of facilitating shareholder participation suggests that jurisdictions and/or companies promote the enlarged use of information technology in voting, including secure electronic voting in all listed companies.

~~The objective of facilitating shareholder participation suggests that companies consider favourably the enlarged use of information technology in voting, including secure electronic voting in absentia.~~

6. Impediments to cross border voting should be eliminated.

25. -Foreign investors often hold their shares through chains of intermediaries. Shares are typically held in accounts with securities intermediaries, that in turn hold accounts with other intermediaries and central securities depositories in other jurisdictions, while the listed company resides in a third country. Such cross-border chains cause special challenges with respect to determining the entitlement of foreign investors to use their voting rights, and the process of communicating with such investors. In combination with business practices which provide only a very short notice period, shareholders are often left with only very limited time to react to a convening notice by the company and to make informed decisions concerning items for decision. This makes cross border voting difficult. The legal and regulatory framework should clarify who is entitled to control the voting rights in cross border situations and where necessary to simplify the depository chain. Moreover, notice periods should ensure that foreign investors in effect have similar opportunities to exercise their ownership functions as domestic investors. To further facilitate voting by foreign investors, laws, regulations and corporate practices should allow participation through electronic means ~~which make use of modern technology in a non-discriminatory way.~~

D. Shareholders, including institutional shareholders, should be allowed to consult with each other on issues concerning their basic shareholder rights as defined in the Principles, subject to exceptions to prevent abuse.

26. -It has long been recognised that in companies with dispersed ownership, individual shareholders might have too small a stake in the company to warrant the cost of taking action or for making an investment in monitoring performance. Moreover, if small shareholders did invest resources in such activities, others would also gain without having contributed (i.e. they are “free riders”). This effect, which serves to lower incentives for monitoring, is probably less of a problem for institutions, particularly financial institutions acting in a fiduciary capacity, in deciding whether to increase their ownership to a significant stake in individual companies, or to rather simply diversify. However, other costs with regard to holding a significant stake might still be high. In many instances institutional investors are prevented from doing this because it is beyond their capacity or would require investing more of their assets in one company than may be prudent. To overcome this asymmetry which favours diversification, they should be allowed, and even encouraged, to co-operate and co-ordinate their actions in nominating and electing board members, placing proposals on the agenda and holding discussions directly with a company in order to improve its corporate governance. More generally, shareholders should be allowed to communicate with each other without having to comply with the formalities of proxy solicitation.

27. -It must be recognised, however, that co-operation among investors could also be used to manipulate markets and to obtain control over a company without being subject to any takeover regulations. Moreover, co-operation might also be for the purposes of circumventing competition law. ~~For this reason, in some countries, the ability of institutional investors to co-operate on their voting strategy is either limited or prohibited.~~ Shareholder agreements may also be closely monitored. However, if co-operation does not involve issues of corporate control, or conflict with concerns about market efficiency and fairness, the benefits of more effective ownership may still be obtained. ~~Necessary disclosure of co-operation among investors, institutional or otherwise, may have to be accompanied by provisions which prevent trading for a period so as to avoid the possibility of market manipulation~~ To provide clarity among shareholders, regulators may issue guidance on forms of coordination and agreements that do or do not constitute such acting in concert in the context of takeover rules.

E. All shareholders of the same series of a class should be treated equally. Capital structures and arrangements that enable certain shareholders to obtain a degree of control disproportionate to their equity ownership should be disclosed.

- 1. Within any series of a class, all shares should carry the same rights. All investors should be able to obtain information about the rights attached to all series and classes of shares before they purchase. Any changes in voting rights should be subject to approval by those classes of shares which are negatively affected.**

28. -The optimal capital structure of the firm is best decided by the management and the board, subject to the approval of the shareholders. Some companies issue preferred (or preference) shares which have a preference in respect of receipt of the profits of the firm but which normally have no voting rights. Companies may also issue participation certificates or shares without voting rights, which would presumably trade at different prices than shares with voting rights. All of these structures may be effective in distributing risk and reward in ways that are thought to be in the best interests of the company and to cost-efficient financing. ~~The Principles do not take a position on the concept of “one share one vote”. However, many institutional investors and shareholder associations support this concept.~~

29. -Investors can expect to be informed regarding their voting rights before they invest. Once they have invested, their rights should not be changed unless those holding voting shares have had the

opportunity to participate in the decision. Proposals to change the voting rights of different series and classes of shares should be submitted for approval at general shareholders meetings by a specified (normally higher) majority of voting shares in the affected categories.

2. The disclosure of capital structures and control arrangements should be required.

30. -Some capital structures allow a shareholder to exercise a degree of control over the corporation disproportionate to the shareholders' equity ownership in the company. Pyramid structures, cross shareholdings and shares with limited or multiple voting rights can be used to diminish the capability of non-controlling shareholders to influence corporate policy.

31. -In addition to ownership relations, other devices can affect control over the corporation. Shareholder agreements are a common means for groups of shareholders, who individually may hold relatively small shares of total equity, to act in concert so as to constitute an effective majority, or at least the largest single block of shareholders. Shareholder agreements usually give those participating in the agreements preferential rights to purchase shares if other parties to the agreement wish to sell. These agreements can also contain provisions that require those accepting the agreement not to sell their shares for a specified time. Shareholder agreements can cover issues such as how the board or the Chairman will be selected. The agreements can also oblige those in the agreement to vote as a block. Some countries have found it necessary to closely monitor such agreements and to limit their duration.

32. -Voting caps limit the number of votes that a shareholder may cast, regardless of the number of shares the shareholder may actually possess. Voting caps therefore redistribute control and may affect the incentives for shareholder participation in shareholder meetings.

33. -Given the capacity of these mechanisms to redistribute the influence of shareholders on company policy, ~~shareholders can reasonably expect that all the disclosure of~~ such capital structures and arrangements should be disclosed/required. Disclosure about such schemes also allows shareholders and potential investors to make better informed decisions (see Chapter V.3.).

F. Related-party transactions should be approved and conducted in a manner that ensures proper management of conflict of interest and protects the interest of the company and its shareholders.

1. Conflicts of interest inherent in related-party transactions should be addressed.

34. -The potential abuse of related party transactions is an important policy issue in all markets, but particularly in those where corporate ownership is concentrated and corporate groups prevail. Banning these transactions is normally not a solution as there is nothing wrong per se with entering into transactions with related parties, provided that the conflicts of interest inherent in those transactions are adequately addressed, including through proper monitoring and disclosure. This is all the more important where significant portions of income and/or costs arise from transactions with related parties.

35. -Most jurisdictions have put in place rules for clearly flagging these transactions. They include broad definitions of what is understood to be a related party as well as rules to disregard some of these transactions when they are not material because they do not exceed ex ante thresholds, can be regarded as recurrent and taking place at verifiable market terms or taking place with subsidiaries where no specific interest of a related party is present. Once the related party transactions have been identified, jurisdictions set procedures for approving them in a manner that minimises their negative potential. In most jurisdictions, great emphasis is placed on board approval, often with a prominent role for independent board members, or a requirement for the board to justify the interest of the transaction for the company.

Shareholders may also be given a say in approving certain transactions, with interested shareholders excluded.

3.2. Abusive self-dealing should be prohibited

~~Abusive self-dealing occurs when persons having close relationships to the company, including controlling shareholders, exploit those relationships to the detriment of the company and investors. As insider trading entails manipulation of the capital markets, it is prohibited by securities regulations, company law and/or criminal law in most OECD countries. However, not all jurisdictions prohibit such practices, and in some cases enforcement is not vigorous. These practices can be seen as constituting a breach of good corporate governance inasmuch as they violate the principle of equitable treatment of shareholders.~~

Members of the board and key executives should be required to disclose to the board whether they, directly, indirectly or on behalf of third parties, have a material interest in any transaction or matter directly affecting the corporation.

36. -Members of the board ~~and~~, key executives and, where applicable, controlling shareholders have an obligation to inform the board where they have a business, family or other special relationship outside of the company that could affect their judgement with respect to a particular transaction or matter affecting the company. Such special relationships include situations where executives and board members have a relationship with the company via their association with a shareholder who is in a position to exercise control. Where a material interest has been declared, it is good practice for that person not to be involved in any decision involving the transaction or matter and for the decision of the board to be specifically motivated against the presence of such interests and/or to justify the interest of the transaction for the company, notably by mentioning the terms of the transaction.

F.G. Minority shareholders should be protected from abusive actions by, or in the interest of, controlling shareholders acting either directly or indirectly, and should have effective means of redress. Abusive self-dealing should be prohibited.

37. -Many publicly traded companies have a large controlling shareholder. While the presence of a controlling shareholder can reduce the agency problem by closer monitoring of management, weaknesses in the legal and regulatory framework may lead to the abuse of other shareholders in the company. Abusive self-dealing occurs when persons having close relationships to the company, including controlling shareholders, exploit those relationships to the detriment of the company and investors.

38. -The potential for abuse is marked where the legal system allows, and the market accepts, controlling shareholders to exercise a level of control which does not correspond to the level of risk that they assume as owners through exploiting legal devices to separate ownership from control, such as pyramid structures or multiple voting rights. Such abuse may be carried out in various ways, including the extraction of direct private benefits via high pay and bonuses for employed family members and associates, inappropriate related party transactions, systematic bias in business decisions and changes in the capital structure through special issuance of shares favouring the controlling shareholder.

39. -In addition to disclosure, a key to protecting minority shareholders is a clearly articulated duty of loyalty by board members to the company and to all shareholders. Indeed, abuse of minority shareholders is most pronounced in those countries where the legal and regulatory framework is weak in this regard. A particular issue arises in some jurisdictions where groups of companies are prevalent and where the duty of loyalty of a board member might be ambiguous and even interpreted as to the group. In these cases, some countries are now moving to control negative effects by specifying that a transaction in favour of

another group company must be offset by receiving a corresponding benefit from other companies of the group.

40. -Other common provisions to protect minority shareholders, which have proven effective, include pre-emptive rights in relation to share issues, qualified majorities for certain shareholder decisions and the possibility to use cumulative voting in electing members of the board. Under certain circumstances, some jurisdictions require or permit controlling shareholders to buy-out the remaining shareholders at a share-price that is established through an independent appraisal. This is particularly important when controlling shareholders decide to de-list an enterprise. Other means of improving minority shareholder rights include derivative (including multiple) and class action law suits. Some regulators have established complaint facilities, and some have the possibility to support lawsuits through disclosure of relevant information and/or funding. With the common aim of improving market credibility, the choice and ultimate design of different provisions to protect minority shareholders necessarily depends on the overall regulatory framework and the national legal system.

G.H. Markets for corporate control should be allowed to function in an efficient and transparent manner.

- 1. The rules and procedures governing the acquisition of corporate control in the capital markets, and extraordinary transactions such as mergers, and sales of substantial portions of corporate assets, should be clearly articulated and disclosed so that investors understand their rights and recourse. Transactions should occur at transparent prices and under fair conditions that protect the rights of all shareholders according to their class.**
- 2. Anti-take-over devices should not be used to shield management and the board from accountability.**

41. -In some countries, companies employ anti-take-over devices. However, both investors and stock exchanges have expressed concern over the possibility that widespread use of anti-take-over devices may be a serious impediment to the functioning of the market for corporate control. In some instances, take-over defences can simply be devices to shield the management or the board from shareholder monitoring. In implementing any anti-takeover devices and in dealing with take-over proposals, the fiduciary duty of the board to shareholders and the company must remain paramount.

III. INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS, STOCK MARKETS, AND OTHER INTERMEDIARIES

The corporate governance framework should provide sound economic incentives throughout the investment chain and ensure that stock markets function in a way that contributes to good governance.

42. -In order to be effective, the legal and regulatory framework of corporate governance must be developed with a view to the economic reality in which it is to be implemented. In many jurisdictions, the real world of corporate governance and ownership is no longer characterised by a straight and uncompromised relationship between the performance of the company and the income of the ultimate beneficiaries of shareholdings. In reality, the investment chain is often long and complex, with numerous intermediaries that stand between the ultimate beneficiary and the company. The presence of intermediaries acting as independent decision makers influences the incentives and the ability to engage in corporate governance.

43. -The share of equity investments held by institutional investors such as mutual funds, pension funds, insurance companies and hedge funds has increased significantly, and many of their assets are managed by specialised asset managers. The ability and interest of institutional investors and asset managers to engage in corporate governance varies widely. For some, engagement in corporate governance, including the exercise of voting rights, is a natural part of their business model. Others may offer their beneficiaries and clients a business model and investment strategy that does not include or motivate spending resources on active ownership engagement. If ownership engagement runs contrary to the institution's business model and investment strategy, mandatory requirements to engage, for example through voting, may be ineffective and lead to a box-ticking approach.

The exercise of ownership rights by all shareholders, including institutional investors, should be facilitated.

44. -The Principles recommend that institutional investors disclose their policies with respect to corporate governance. Voting at shareholder meetings is, however, only one channel for ownership engagement. Direct contact and dialogue with the board and management represent other forms of ownership engagement that are frequently used. In recent years, some countries have begun to consider adoption of so-called "stewardship codes" that institutional investors are invited to sign up to on a voluntary basis. As investors may pursue different investment objectives, the Principles do not advocate any particular investment strategy and do not seek to prescribe the optimal degree of investor activism. Nevertheless, in considering the costs and benefits of exercising their ownership rights, many investors are likely to conclude that positive financial returns and growth can be obtained by undertaking a reasonable amount of analysis and by using their rights.

A. Institutional investors acting in a fiduciary capacity, including asset managers, should disclose their ~~overall~~ corporate governance and voting policies with respect to their investments, including the procedures that they have in place for deciding on the use of their voting rights. Disclosure of actual voting records is considered good practice, especially where an institution has a declared policy to vote.

45. It is increasingly common for shares to be held by institutional investors. The effectiveness and credibility of the entire corporate governance system and company oversight will, therefore depend to a large extent depend on institutional investors' willingness and ability to that can make informed use of their shareholder rights and effectively exercise their ownership functions in companies in which they invest. While this principle does not require institutional investors to vote their shares, it calls for disclosure of how they exercise their ownership rights with due consideration to cost effectiveness. For

institutions acting in a fiduciary capacity, such as pension funds, collective investment schemes and some activities of insurance companies, the right to vote can be considered part of the value of the investment being undertaken on behalf of their clients. Failure to exercise the ownership rights could result in a loss to the investor who should therefore be made aware of the policy to be followed by the institutional investors.

46. -In some countries, the demand for disclosure of corporate governance policies to the market is quite detailed and includes requirements for explicit strategies regarding the circumstances in which the institution will intervene in a company; the approach they will use for such intervention; and how they will assess the effectiveness of the strategy. In several an increasing number of countries institutional investors are either required to disclose their actual voting records or it is regarded as good practice and implemented on an “apply or explain” basis. Disclosure is either to their clients (only with respect to the securities of each client) or, in the case of investment advisors to registered investment companies, to the market, which is a less costly procedure. A complementary approach to participation in shareholders’ meetings is to establish a continuing dialogue with portfolio companies. Such a dialogue between institutional investors and companies should be encouraged, especially by lifting unnecessary regulatory barriers, although it is incumbent on the company to treat all investors equally and not to divulge information to the institutional investors which is not at the same time made available to the market. The additional information provided by a company would normally therefore include general background information about the markets in which the company is operating and further elaboration of information already available to the market.

47. -When fiduciary institutional investors have developed and disclosed a corporate governance policy, effective implementation requires that they also set aside the appropriate human and financial resources to pursue this policy in a way that their beneficiaries and portfolio companies can expect. The disclosure of actual voting records should be considered good practice, especially when the voting of shares is an explicit part of the institution’s corporate governance policy. When an active corporate governance policy is used to justify management fees, the nature and practical implementation of an active corporate governance policy, including staffing, should be transparent to beneficiaries who rely on institutions with such active corporate governance policies.

B. Votes should be cast by custodians or nominees in a manner agreed uponline with the directions of the beneficial owner of the shares.

~~In some OECD countries it was customary for financial institutions which held shares in custody for investors to cast the votes of those shares. Custodians such as banks and brokerage firms holding securities as nominees for customers were sometimes required to vote in support of management unless specifically instructed by the shareholder to do otherwise.~~

48. ~~The trend in OECD countries is to remove provisions that automatically enable eCustodian institutions holding securities as nominees for customers should not be permitted to cast the votes of shareholder on those securities unless they have received specific instructions to do so. Rules ~~in some countries have recently been revised to~~should require custodian institutions to provide shareholders with information concerning their options in the ~~use~~exercise of their voting rights. Shareholders may elect to vote by themselves or to delegate all voting rights to custodians. Alternatively, shareholders may choose to be informed of all upcoming shareholder votes and may decide to cast some votes while delegating some voting rights to the custodian. ~~It is necessary to draw a reasonable balance between assuring that shareholder votes are not cast by custodians without regard for the wishes of shareholders and not imposing excessive burdens on custodians to secure shareholder approval before casting votes. It is sufficient to disclose to the shareholders that, if no instruction to the contrary is received, the custodian will vote the shares in the way it deems consistent with shareholder interest.~~~~

49. -Holders of depository receipts should be provided with the same ultimate rights and practical opportunities to participate in corporate governance as are accorded to holders of the underlying shares. Where the direct holders of shares may use proxies, the depository, trust office or equivalent body should therefore issue proxies on a timely basis to depository receipt holders. The depository receipt holders should be able to issue binding voting instructions with respect to the shares, which the depository or trust office holds on their behalf.

50. -It should be noted that this principle does not apply to the exercise of voting rights by trustees or other persons acting under a special legal mandate (such as, for example, bankruptcy receivers and estate executors).

~~Holders of depository receipts should be provided with the same ultimate rights and practical opportunities to participate in corporate governance as are accorded to holders of the underlying shares. Where the direct holders of shares may use proxies, the depository, trust office or equivalent body should therefore issue proxies on a timely basis to depository receipt holders. The depository receipt holders should be able to issue binding voting instructions with respect to the shares, which the depository or trust office holds on their behalf.~~

C. Institutional investors acting in a fiduciary capacity, including asset managers, should disclose how they manage material conflicts of interest that may affect the exercise of key ownership rights regarding their investments.

51. -The incentives for intermediary owners to vote their shares and exercise key ownership functions may, under certain circumstances, differ from those of direct owners. Such differences may sometimes be commercially sound but may also arise from conflicts of interest which are particularly acute when the fiduciary institution is a subsidiary or an affiliate of another financial institution, and especially an integrated financial group. When such conflicts arise from material business relationships, for example, through an agreement to manage the portfolio company's funds, such conflicts should be identified and disclosed.

52. -At the same time, institutions should disclose what actions they are taking to minimise the potentially negative impact on their ability to exercise key ownership rights. Such actions may include the separation of bonuses for fund management from those related to the acquisition of new business elsewhere in the organisation. Fee structures for asset management and other intermediary services should be transparent throughout the investment chain.

D. The corporate governance framework should be complemented by an effective approach that addresses and promotes ensure that the provision of analysis or advice by proxy advisors, analysts, brokers, rating agencies and others, that provide analysis or advice is relevant to decisions by investors, free from material disclose and minimise conflicts of interest that might compromise the integrity of their analysis or advice.

53. -The investment chain from ultimate owners to corporations does not only involve multiple intermediary owners. It also includes a wide variety of professions that sell advice and services to intermediary owners. Proxy advisors whose business model is to sell recommendations to institutional investors on how to vote and to sell services that help in the process of voting are among the most relevant from a direct corporate governance perspective. In some cases, proxy advisors also sell corporate governance related consulting services to corporations and provide so-called corporate governance ratings of these companies. Other services providers, such as analysts, brokers and rating agencies, perform similar roles and face the same potential conflicts of interest.

54. ~~In addition to demanding independent and competent auditors, and to facilitate timely dissemination of information~~ Considering the importance of – and sometimes dependence on – various services in corporate governance, the corporate governance framework should promote a number of countries have taken steps to ensure the integrity of those professions and activities that serve as conduits of analysis and advice to the markets such as analysts, brokers, rating agencies, and proxy advisors. These intermediaries, if they are ~~When managed appropriately operating free from conflicts and with integrity, these can play an important role in providing incentives for company boards to follow~~ shaping good corporate governance practices. At the same time, Concerns have arisen, however, in response to evidence that conflicts of interest often may arise and may affect judgement. This could be the case, such as when the provider of advice is also seeking to provide other services to the company in question, or where the provider has a direct material interest in the company or its competitors. Many jurisdictions have adopted regulations or encouraged the implementation of self-regulatory codes designed to mitigate such conflicts of interest, or at least provide for more extensive disclosure.

55. ~~Providers of corporate governance services and advice should provide clients with information about the process and methodology that underpin their recommendations. The concern identifies a highly relevant dimension of the disclosure and transparency process that targets the professional standards of stock market research analysts, rating agencies, investment banks, etc. Experience in other areas indicates that the preferred solution is to demand full disclosure of conflicts of interest and how the entity is choosing to manage them. Particularly important will be disclosure about how the entity is structuring the incentives of its employees in order to eliminate the potential conflict of interest. Such disclosure allows investors to judge the risks involved and the likely bias in the advice and information. IOSCO has developed statements of principles relating to analysts and rating agencies (IOSCO Statement of Principles for Addressing Sell-side Securities Analyst Conflicts of Interest; IOSCO Statement of Principles Regarding the Activities of Credit Rating Agencies).~~

D.E. Insider trading and abusive self-dealing market manipulation should be prohibited and the applicable rules enforced.

56. ~~Abusive self dealing occurs when persons having close relationships to the company, including controlling shareholders, exploit those relationships to the detriment of the company and investors. As insider trading entails manipulation of the capital markets, it is prohibited by securities regulations, company law and/or criminal law in most OECD countries. However, not all jurisdictions prohibit such practices, and in some cases enforcement is not vigorous~~ have taken vigorous enforcement action. These practices can be seen as constituting a breach of good corporate governance ~~inasmuch~~ as they violate the principle of equitable treatment of shareholders.

~~The Principles reaffirm that it is reasonable for investors to expect that the abuse of insider power be prohibited. In cases where such abuses are not specifically forbidden by legislation or where enforcement is not effective, it will be important for governments to take measures to remove any such gaps.~~

F. For companies who are listed in a jurisdiction other than their jurisdiction of incorporation, the applicable corporate governance laws and regulations should be clearly disclosed. In the case of cross listings, the criteria and procedure for recognising the listing requirements of the primary listing should be transparent and documented.

57. ~~It is increasingly common that companies are listed or traded at venues located in a different jurisdiction than the one where the company is incorporated. This may create uncertainty among investors about which corporate governance rules and regulations apply for that company. It may concern everything from procedures and locations for the annual shareholders meeting, to minority rights. The trading venue~~

and/or the company should therefore clearly disclose which jurisdiction's rules are applicable. When key corporate governance provisions fall under another jurisdiction than the jurisdiction of trading, the main differences should be noted.

58. -Another important consequence of increased internationalisation and integration of stock markets is the prevalence of secondary listings of an already listed company on another stock exchange, so called cross-listings. Companies with cross-listings are often subject to the regulations and authorities of the jurisdiction where they have their primary listing. In case of a secondary listing, exceptions from local listing rules are typically granted based on the recognition of the listing requirements and corporate governance regulations of the exchange where the company has its primary listing. Stock markets should clearly disclose the rules and procedures that apply to cross-listings and related exceptions from local corporate governance rules.

G. The structure and functioning of stock exchanges and trading venues should ensure efficient and fair price formation as a basis for effective corporate governance.

59. -Effective corporate governance requires that shareholders are able to monitor corporations by comparing market information with their own assessments of company prospects and performance. When they believe it is advantageous, shareholders will either use their voice to influence corporate behaviour, sell their shares, or underweight a company's shares in their portfolios. Equal, timely and cost-effective access to market information, including the process of stock price formation, is therefore an essential prerequisite for exercising effective corporate governance. The ability of stock markets to provide equal, timely and cost-effective access to market information is not only essential for effective governance. It is also a cornerstone for investors' confidence and trust in the integrity of the markets.

IV. THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The corporate governance framework should recognise the rights of stakeholders established by law, international agreements or ~~through mutual agreements~~, and encourage active co-operation between corporations and stakeholders in creating wealth, jobs, and the sustainability of financially sound enterprises.

60. -A key aspect of corporate governance is concerned with ensuring the flow of external capital to companies both in the form of equity and credit. Corporate governance is also concerned with finding ways to encourage the various stakeholders in the firm to undertake economically optimal levels of investment in firm-specific human and physical capital. The competitiveness and ultimate success of a corporation is the result of teamwork that embodies contributions from a range of different resource providers including investors, employees, creditors, ~~and suppliers~~, and customers. Corporations should recognise that the contributions of stakeholders constitute a valuable resource for building competitive and profitable companies. It is, therefore, in the long-term interest of corporations to foster wealth-creating co-operation among stakeholders. The governance framework should recognise ~~that the interests of the corporation are served by recognising~~ the interests of stakeholders and their contribution to the long-term success of the corporation.

A. The rights of stakeholders that are established by law or through mutual agreements are to be respected.

61. ~~In all OECD countries,~~ The rights of stakeholders are often established by law (e.g. labour, business, commercial and insolvency laws) or by contractual relations that companies must respect. Nevertheless, eEven in areas where stakeholder interests are not legislated, many firms make additional commitments to stakeholders, and concern over corporate reputation and corporate performance often requires the recognition of broader interests. Best practice calls for implementation of internationally recognised agreements and verification through due diligence procedures, notably as provided for in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and its general principles on due diligence.

B. Where stakeholder interests are protected by law, stakeholders should have the opportunity to obtain effective redress for violation of their rights.

62. -The legal framework and process should be transparent and not impede the ability of stakeholders to communicate and to obtain redress for the violation of rights.

C. ~~Performance-enhancing m~~echanisms for employee participation should be permitted to develop.

63. -The degree to which employees participate in corporate governance depends on national laws and practices, and may vary from company to company as well. ~~In the context of corporate governance, performance-enhancing mechanisms for participation may benefit companies directly as well as indirectly through the readiness by employees to invest in firm specific skills.~~ Examples of mechanisms for employee participation include: employee representation on boards; and governance processes such as works councils that consider employee viewpoints in certain key decisions. With respect to performance enhancing mechanisms, employee stock ownership plans or other profit sharing mechanisms are to be

found in many countries. Mechanisms for employee participation that aim at improving corporate performance may also increase the readiness of employees to invest in firm specific skills. Pension commitments are also often an element of the relationship between the company and its past and present employees. Where such commitments involve establishing an independent fund, its trustees should be independent of the company's management and manage the fund for all beneficiaries. International conventions and norms also recognise the rights of employees to information, consultation and negotiation.

D. Where stakeholders participate in the corporate governance process, they should have access to relevant, sufficient and reliable information on a timely and regular basis.

64. -Where laws and practice of corporate governance systems provide for participation by stakeholders, it is important that stakeholders have access to information necessary to fulfil their responsibilities.

E. Stakeholders, including individual employees and their representative bodies, should be able to freely communicate their concerns about illegal or unethical practices to the board and to the competent public authorities and their rights should not be compromised for doing this.

65. -Unethical and illegal practices by corporate officers may not only violate the rights of stakeholders but also be to the detriment of the company and its shareholders in terms of reputation effects and an increasing risk of future financial liabilities. It is therefore to the advantage of the company and its shareholders to establish procedures and safe-harbours for complaints by employees, either personally or through their representative bodies, and others outside the company, concerning illegal and unethical behaviour. In many countries the board is being encouraged by laws and or principles to protect these individuals and representative bodies and to give them confidential direct access to someone independent on the board, often a member of an audit or an ethics committee. Some companies have established an ombudsman to deal with complaints. Several regulators have also established confidential phone and e-mail facilities to receive allegations. While in certain countries representative employee bodies undertake the tasks of conveying concerns to the company, individual employees should not be precluded from, or be less protected, when acting alone. When there is an inadequate response in the absence of timely remedial action or in the face of reasonable risk of negative employment action to a complaint regarding contravention of the law, the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* encourage ~~them~~ employees to report their *bona fide* complaint to the competent public authorities. Additionally or alternatively, any case of violations of the recommendations provided for in the *OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises* can be brought to the National Contact Point (NCP). The company should refrain from discriminatory or disciplinary actions against such employees or bodies.

F. The corporate governance framework should be complemented by an effective, efficient insolvency framework and by effective enforcement of creditor rights.

66. ~~Especially in emerging markets,~~ eCreditors are a key stakeholder and the terms, volume and type of credit extended to firms will depend importantly on their rights and on their enforceability. Companies with a good corporate governance record are often able to borrow larger sums and on more favourable terms than those with poor records or which operate in ~~non-~~ less transparent markets. The framework for corporate insolvency varies widely across countries. In some countries, when companies are nearing insolvency, the legislative framework imposes a duty on directors to act in the interests of creditors, who might therefore play a prominent role in the governance of the company. Other countries have mechanisms which encourage the debtor to reveal timely information about the company's difficulties so that a consensual solution can be found between the debtor and its creditors.

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| 67. -Creditor rights also vary, ranging from secured bond holders to unsecured creditors. Insolvency procedures usually require efficient mechanisms for reconciling the interests of different classes of creditors. In many jurisdictions provision is made for special rights such as through “debtor in possession” financing which provides incentives/protection for new funds made available to the enterprise in bankruptcy.

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V. DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY

The corporate governance framework should ensure that timely and accurate disclosure is made on all material matters regarding the corporation, including the financial situation, performance, ownership, and governance of the company.

68. -In most ~~OECD~~ countries a large amount of information, both mandatory and voluntary, is compiled on publicly traded and large unlisted enterprises, and subsequently disseminated to a broad range of users. Public disclosure is typically required, at a minimum, on an annual basis though some countries require periodic disclosure on a semi-annual or quarterly basis, or even more frequently in the case of material developments affecting the company. Companies often make voluntary disclosure that goes beyond minimum disclosure requirements in response to market demand.

69. -The Principles support timely disclosure of all material developments that arise between regular reports. They also support simultaneous reporting of information to all shareholders in order to ensure their equitable treatment. In maintaining close relations with investors and market participants, companies must be careful not to violate this fundamental principle of equitable treatment.

70. -Disclosure requirements are not expected to place unreasonable administrative or cost burdens on enterprises. Nor are companies expected to disclose information that may endanger their competitive position unless disclosure is necessary to fully inform the investment decision and to avoid misleading the investor. In order to determine what information should be disclosed at a minimum, many countries apply the concept of materiality. Material information can be defined as information whose omission or misstatement could influence the economic decisions taken by users of information.

71. -A strong disclosure regime that promotes real transparency is a pivotal feature of market-based monitoring of companies and is central to shareholders' ability to exercise their ownership rights on an informed basis. Experience ~~in countries with large and active equity markets~~ shows that disclosure can also be a powerful tool for influencing the behaviour of companies and for protecting investors. A strong disclosure regime can help to attract capital and maintain confidence in the capital markets. By contrast, weak disclosure and non-transparent practices can contribute to unethical behaviour and to a loss of market integrity at great cost, not just to the company and its shareholders but also to the economy as a whole. Shareholders and potential investors require access to regular, reliable and comparable information in sufficient detail for them to assess the stewardship of management, and make informed decisions about the valuation, ownership and voting of shares. Insufficient or unclear information may hamper the ability of the markets to function, increase the cost of capital and result in a poor allocation of resources.

72. -Disclosure also helps improve public understanding of the structure and activities of enterprises, corporate policies and performance with respect to environmental and ethical standards, and companies' relationships with the communities in which they operate. The *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* are relevant in this context.

~~Disclosure requirements are not expected to place unreasonable administrative or cost burdens on enterprises. Nor are companies expected to disclose information that may endanger their competitive position unless disclosure is necessary to fully inform the investment decision and to avoid misleading the investor. In order to determine what information should be disclosed at a minimum, many countries apply the concept of materiality. Material information can be defined as information whose omission or misstatement could influence the economic decisions taken by users of information.~~

~~The Principles support timely disclosure of all material developments that arise between regular reports. They also support simultaneous reporting of information to all shareholders in order to ensure their equitable treatment. In maintaining close relations with investors and market participants, companies must be careful not to violate this fundamental principle of equitable treatment.~~

A. Disclosure should include, but not be limited to, material information on:

1. The financial and operating results of the company.

73. -Audited financial statements showing the financial performance and the financial situation of the company (most typically including the balance sheet, the profit and loss statement, the cash flow statement and notes to the financial statements) are the most widely used source of information on companies. ~~In their current form, the two principal goals of financial statements are to~~ They enable appropriate monitoring to take place and ~~to~~ provide the basis to value securities. Management's discussion and analysis of operations is typically included in annual reports. This discussion is most useful when read in conjunction with the accompanying financial statements. Investors are particularly interested in information that may shed light on the future performance of the enterprise.

74. -Arguably, failures of governance can often be linked to the failure to disclose the "whole picture", particularly where off-balance sheet items are used to provide guarantees or similar commitments between related companies. It is therefore important that transactions relating to an entire group of companies be disclosed in line with high quality internationally recognised standards and include information about contingent liabilities and off-balance sheet transactions, as well as special purpose entities.

75. -Some countries require additional disclosures for large companies, for examples net turnover figures or payments made to governments broken down by categories of activity and country (country-by-country reporting), or fees paid to auditors for non-audit services.

2. Company objectives and non-financial information.

76. -In addition to their commercial objectives, companies are encouraged to disclose policies relating to business ethics, the environment, human rights, including where relevant within their supply chain, and other public policy commitments. Such information may be important for investors and other users of information to better evaluate the relationship between companies and the communities in which they operate and the steps that companies have taken to implement their objectives.

77. -In many countries, such disclosures are required for large companies, typically as part of their management reports. Many companies have started to embrace concepts such as sustainability or "integrated" reporting. To allow investors to hold the board and managers accountable for the use of company funds, disclosure of donations for political purposes is also considered good practice, particularly where such information is not easily available through other disclosure channels.

3. Major share ownership, including ultimate beneficial owners, and voting rights.

78. -One of the basic rights of investors is to be informed about the ownership structure of the enterprise and their rights vis-à-vis the rights of other owners. The right to such information should also extend to information about the structure of a group of companies and intra-group relations. Such disclosures should make transparent the objectives, nature and structure of the group. ~~Countries often require d~~Disclosure of ownership data should be provided once certain thresholds of ownership are passed. Such disclosure might include data on major shareholders and others that, directly or indirectly, control or

may control the company through special voting rights, shareholder agreements, the ownership of controlling or large blocks of shares, significant cross shareholding relationships and cross guarantees.

79. -Particularly for enforcement purposes, and to identify potential conflicts of interest, related party transactions and insider trading, information about record ownership ~~may have~~needs to be complemented with updated information about beneficial ownership. In cases where major shareholdings are held through intermediary structures or arrangements, information about the beneficial owners should therefore be obtainable at least by regulatory and enforcement agencies and/or through the judicial process and as much as possible be disclosed. The OECD template *Options for Obtaining Beneficial Ownership and Control Information* can serve as a useful self-assessment tool for ~~countries~~jurisdictions that wish strive to ensure necessary access to information about beneficial ownership.

4. Remuneration ~~policy for~~of members of the board and key executives, and

80. -Information about board and executive remuneration is also of concern to shareholders. Of particular interest is the link between remuneration and company performance. Companies are generally expected to disclose information on the remuneration of board members and key executives so that investors can assess the costs and benefits of remuneration plans and the contribution of incentive schemes, such as stock option schemes, to company performance. Disclosure on an individual basis (including termination and retirement provisions) is increasingly regarded as good practice and is now mandated in ~~several~~many countries. In these cases, some jurisdictions call for remuneration of a certain number of the highest paid executives to be disclosed, while in others it is confined to specified positions.

5. ~~information~~Information about board members, including their qualifications, the selection process, other company directorships and whether they are regarded as independent by the board.

81. -Investors require information on individual board members and key executives in order to evaluate their experience and qualifications and assess any potential conflicts of interest that might affect their judgement. For board members, the information should include their qualifications, share ownership in the company, membership of other boards and whether they are considered by the board to be an independent member. It is important to disclose membership of other boards not only because it is an indication of experience and possible time pressures facing a member of the board, but also because it may reveal potential conflicts of interest and makes transparent the degree to which there are inter-locking boards.

82. ~~A number of~~nNational principles, and in some cases laws, lay down specific duties for board members who can be regarded as independent and ~~in some instances~~ recommend that a significant part, in some instances a majority, of the board should be independent. ~~In many countries, it is~~should be incumbent on the board to set out the reasons why a member of the board can be considered independent. It is then up to the shareholders, and ultimately the market, to determine if those reasons are justified. ~~Several countries have concluded that~~eCompanies should disclose the selection process and especially whether it was open to a broad field of candidates. Such information should be provided in advance of any decision by the general shareholder's meeting or on a continuing basis if the situation has changed materially.

6. Related party transactions.

83. ~~It is important for the market to know whether~~To ensure that the company is being run with due regard to the interests of all its investors. ~~To this end,~~ it is essential ~~for the company~~ to fully disclose all material related party transactions and the terms of such transactions to the market, ~~either individually, or~~

~~on a grouped basis, including whether they have been executed at arms length and on normal market terms individually.~~ In ~~a number of many~~ jurisdictions this is indeed already a legal requirement. Related parties ~~can should at least~~ include entities that control or are under common control with the company, significant shareholders including members of their families and key management personnel. While the definition of related parties in internationally accepted accounting standards provides a useful reference, the corporate governance framework should ensure that all related parties are properly identified and that in cases where specific interests of related parties are present, material transactions with subsidiaries that are consolidated are also disclosed.

84. -Transactions involving the major shareholders (or their close family, relations etc.), either directly or indirectly, are potentially the most difficult type of transactions. In some jurisdictions, shareholders above a limit as low as 5 per cent shareholding are obliged to report transactions. Disclosure requirements include the nature of the relationship where control exists and the nature and amount of transactions with related parties, grouped as appropriate. Given the inherent opaqueness of many transactions, the obligation may need to be placed on the beneficiary to inform the board about the transaction, which in turn should make a disclosure to the market. This should not absolve the firm from maintaining its own monitoring, which is an important task for the board.

85. -To make disclosure more informative, some jurisdictions distinguish related party transactions according to their materiality and conditions. Ongoing disclosure of material transactions is required, with a possible exception for recurrent transactions on “market terms”, which can be disclosed only in periodic reports. To be effective, materiality thresholds may need to be based mainly on quantitative criteria, but avoidance of disclosure through splitting of transactions with the same related party should not be permitted.

7. Foreseeable risk factors.

86. -Users of financial information and market participants need information on reasonably foreseeable material risks that may include: risks that are specific to the industry or the geographical areas in which the company operates; dependence on commodities; financial market risks including interest rate or currency risk; risk related to derivatives and off-balance sheet transactions; and risks related to the environmental liabilities.

87. -The Principles ~~do not~~ envision the disclosure of sufficient and comprehensive information ~~in greater detail than is necessary~~ to fully inform investors of the material and foreseeable risks of the enterprise. Disclosure of risk is most effective when it is tailored to the particular industry in question. Disclosure about the system for monitoring and managing risk is increasingly regarded as good practice.

8. Issues regarding employees and other stakeholders.

88. -Companies ~~are encouraged, and in some countries even obliged, should to~~ provide information on key issues relevant to employees and other stakeholders that may materially affect the performance of the company. Disclosure may include management/employee relations, including remuneration, collective bargaining coverage, and mechanisms for employee representation, and relations with other stakeholders such as creditors, suppliers, and local communities.

89. -Some countries require extensive disclosure of information on human resources. Human resource policies, such as programmes for human resource development and training, retention rates of employees and employee share ownership plans, can communicate important information on the competitive strengths of companies to market participants.

9. Governance structures and policies, ~~in particular, including~~ the content of any corporate governance code or policy and the process by which it is implemented.

90. -Companies should report their corporate governance practices, and ~~in a number of countries~~ such disclosure ~~is now should be~~ mandated as part of the regular reporting. ~~In several countries, e~~Companies ~~must should~~ implement corporate governance principles set, or endorsed, by the listing authority with mandatory reporting on a “comply or explain” basis. Disclosure of the governance structures and policies of the company, including, in the case of non-operating holding companies, that of significant subsidiaries, in particular the division of authority between shareholders, management and board members is important for the assessment of a company’s governance and should cover the division of authority between shareholders, management and board members. Companies should clearly disclose the different roles and responsibilities of the CEO and/or Chair and, where a single person combines both roles, the rationale for this arrangement. It is also good practice to disclose the articles of association, board charters and, where applicable, committee structures and charters.

91. -As a matter of transparency, procedures for shareholders meetings should ensure that votes are properly counted and recorded, and that a timely announcement of the outcome is made.

B. Information should be prepared and disclosed in accordance with high quality standards of accounting and financial and non-financial ~~disclosure~~ reporting.

92. -The application of high quality standards is expected to significantly improve the ability of investors to monitor the company by providing increased relevance, reliability and comparability of reporting, and improved insight into company performance. ~~The quality of information substantially depends on the standards under which it is compiled and disclosed. The Principles support the development of high quality~~ Most countries mandate the use of internationally recognised standards for financial reporting, which can serve to improve transparency and the comparability of financial statements and other financial reporting between countries. Such standards should be developed through open, independent, and public processes involving the private sector and other interested parties such as professional associations and independent experts. High quality domestic standards can be achieved by making them consistent with one of the internationally recognised accounting standards. In many countries, listed companies are required to use these standards.

C. An annual audit should be conducted by an independent, competent and qualified, auditor in order to provide an external and objective assurance to the board and shareholders that the financial statements fairly represent the financial position and performance of the company in all material respects.

93. -In addition to certifying that the financial statements represent fairly the financial position of a company, the audit statement should also include an opinion on the way in which financial statements have been prepared and presented. This should contribute to an improved control environment in the company.

~~Many countries have introduced measures to improve t~~The independence of auditors and ~~to tighten~~ their accountability to shareholders should be required. ~~A number of countries are tightening audit oversight through an independent entity. Indeed, the Principles of Auditor Oversight issued by IOSCO in 2002 states that effective auditor oversight generally includes, inter alia, mechanisms: “...to provide that a body, acting in the public interest, provides oversight over the quality and implementation, and ethical standards used in the jurisdiction, as well as audit quality control environments”; and “...to require auditors to be subject to the discipline of an auditor oversight body that is independent of the audit profession, or, if a professional body acts as the oversight body, is overseen by an independent body”. It is desirable for such an auditor oversight body to operate in the public interest, and have an~~

~~appropriate membership, an adequate charter of responsibilities and powers, and adequate funding that is not under the control of the auditing profession, to carry out those responsibilities. The designation of an audit regulator independent from the profession, consistent with the Core Principles of the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators (IFIAR), can be an important factor in improving audit quality.~~

94. -It is ~~increasingly common~~ good practice for external auditors to be recommended by an independent audit committee of the board or an equivalent body and to be appointed either by that committee/body or by shareholders directly. Moreover, the IOSCO *Principles of Auditor Independence and the Role of Corporate Governance in Monitoring an Auditor's Independence* states that, "standards of auditor independence should establish a framework of principles, supported by a combination of prohibitions, restrictions, other policies and procedures and disclosures, that addresses at least the following threats to independence: self-interest, self-review, advocacy, familiarity and intimidation".

95. -The audit committee or an equivalent body ~~is often specified as should~~ providing provide oversight of the internal audit activities and should also be charged with overseeing the overall relationship with the external auditor including the nature of non-audit services provided by the auditor to the company. Provision of non-audit services by the external auditor to a company can significantly impair their independence and might involve them auditing their own work. To deal with the skewed incentives which may arise, ~~a number of countries now call for the~~ disclosure of payments to external auditors for non-audit services should be required. Examples of other provisions to underpin auditor independence include, a total ban or severe limitation on the nature of non-audit work which can be undertaken by an auditor for their audit client, mandatory rotation of auditors (either partners or in some cases the audit partnership), a temporary ban on the employment of an ex-auditor by the audited company and prohibiting auditors or their dependents from having a financial stake or management role in the companies they audit. Some countries take a more direct regulatory approach and limit the percentage of non-audit income that the auditor can receive from a particular client or limit the total percentage of auditor income that can come from one client.

96. -An issue which has arisen in some jurisdictions concerns the pressing need to ensure the competence of the audit profession. ~~In many cases there is a~~ registration process for individuals to confirm their qualifications is considered good practice. This needs, however, to be supported by ongoing training and monitoring of work experience to ensure ~~an~~ appropriate levels of professional competence and scepticism.

D. External auditors should be accountable to the shareholders and owe a duty to the company to exercise due professional care in the conduct of the audit.

97. -The practice that external auditors are recommended by an independent audit committee of the board or an equivalent body and that external auditors are appointed either by that committee/body or by the shareholders' meeting directly can be regarded as good practice since it clarifies that the external auditor should be accountable to the shareholders. It also underlines that the external auditor owes a duty of due professional care to the company and its shareholders rather than any individual or group of corporate managers that they may interact with for the purpose of their work.

E. Channels for disseminating information should provide for equal, timely and cost-efficient access to relevant information by users.

98. -Channels for the dissemination of information can be as important as the content of the information itself. While the disclosure of information is often provided for by legislation, filing and access

to information can be cumbersome and costly. Filing of statutory reports has been greatly enhanced in some countries by electronic filing and data retrieval systems. ~~Some e~~Countries ~~are now~~should moving move to the next stage by integrating different sources of company information, including shareholder filings. ~~The Internet and other information technologies~~Company websites also provide the opportunity for improving information dissemination, and some countries now require companies to have a website that provides relevant and significant information about the company itself.

99. ~~A number of countries have introduced p~~Provisions for ongoing disclosure (~~often prescribed by law or by listing rules~~) which includes periodic disclosure and continuous or current disclosure which must be provided on an *ad hoc* basis, should be required. With respect to continuous/current disclosure, good practice is to call for “immediate” disclosure of material developments, whether this means “as soon as possible” or is defined as a prescribed maximum number of specified days. The IOSCO Principles for Periodic Disclosure by Listed Entities set guidance for the periodic reports of companies that have securities listed or admitted to trading on a regulated market on which retail investors participate. The *IOSCO Principles for Ongoing Disclosure and Material Development Reporting by Listed Entities* set forth common principles of ongoing disclosure and material development reporting for listed companies.

VI. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

The corporate governance framework should ensure the strategic guidance of the company, the effective monitoring of management by the board, and the board's accountability to the company and the shareholders.

100. -Board structures and procedures vary both within and among ~~OECD~~ countries. Some countries have two-tier boards that separate the supervisory function and the management function into different bodies. Such systems typically have a “supervisory board” composed of non-executive board members and a “management board” composed entirely of executives. Other countries have “unitary” boards, which bring together executive and non-executive board members. In some countries there is also an additional statutory body for audit purposes. The Principles are intended to ~~be sufficiently general to~~ apply to whatever board structure is charged with the functions of governing the enterprise and monitoring management.

101. -Together with guiding corporate strategy, the board is chiefly responsible for monitoring managerial performance and achieving an adequate return for shareholders, while preventing conflicts of interest and balancing competing demands on the corporation. In order for boards to effectively fulfil their responsibilities they must be able to exercise objective and independent judgement. Another important board responsibility is to oversee systems designed to ensure that the corporation obeys applicable laws, including tax, competition, labour, environmental, equal opportunity, health and safety laws. In some countries, companies have found it useful to explicitly articulate the responsibilities that the board assumes and those for which management is accountable.

102. -The board is not only accountable to the company and its shareholders but also has a duty to act in their best interests. In addition, boards are expected to take due regard of, and deal fairly with, other stakeholder interests including those of employees, creditors, customers, suppliers and local communities. Observance of environmental and social standards is relevant in this context.

A. Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the company and the shareholders.

103. -In some countries, the board is legally required to act in the interest of the company, taking into account the interests of shareholders, employees, and the public good. Acting in the best interest of the company should not permit management to become entrenched.

104. -This principle states the two key elements of the fiduciary duty of board members: the duty of care and the duty of loyalty. The duty of care requires board members to act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care. In some jurisdictions there is a standard of reference which is the behaviour that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in similar circumstances. In nearly all jurisdictions, the duty of care does not extend to errors of business judgement so long as board members are not grossly negligent and a decision is made with due diligence etc., ~~or to an obligation to pursue aggressive tax avoidance~~. The principle calls for board members to act on a fully informed basis. Good practice takes this to mean that they should be satisfied that key corporate information and compliance systems are fundamentally sound and underpin the key monitoring role of the board advocated by the Principles. In many jurisdictions this meaning is already considered an element of the duty of care, while in

others it is required by securities regulation, accounting standards etc. The duty of loyalty is of central importance, since it underpins effective implementation of other principles in this document relating to, for example, the equitable treatment of shareholders, monitoring of related party transactions and the establishment of remuneration policy for key executives and board members. It is also a key principle for board members who are working within the structure of a group of companies: even though a company might be controlled by another enterprise, the duty of loyalty for a board member relates to the company and all its shareholders and not to the controlling company of the group.

B. Where board decisions may affect different shareholder groups differently, the board should treat all shareholders fairly.

105. -In carrying out its duties, the board should not be viewed, or act, as an assembly of individual representatives for various constituencies. While specific board members may indeed be nominated or elected by certain shareholders (and sometimes contested by others) it is an important feature of the board's work that board members when they assume their responsibilities carry out their duties in an even-handed manner with respect to all shareholders. This principle is particularly important to establish in the presence of controlling shareholders that *de facto* may be able to select all board members.

C. The board should apply high ethical standards. It should take into account the interests of stakeholders.

106. -The board has a key role in setting the ethical tone of a company, not only by its own actions, but also in appointing and overseeing key executives and consequently the management in general. High ethical standards are in the long term interests of the company as a means to make it credible and trustworthy, not only in day-to-day operations but also with respect to longer term commitments. To make the objectives of the board clear and operational, many companies have found it useful to develop company codes of conduct based on, *inter alia*, professional standards and sometimes broader codes of behaviour. ~~The latter might include a voluntary~~ A good practice is the commitment by the company (including its subsidiaries) to comply with the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* which reflect, inter alia, all four principles contained in the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Labour Rights*. Similarly, jurisdictions are increasingly demanding that boards oversee the tax planning strategies management is allowed to conduct, thus discouraging practices that do not contribute to the long term interests of the company and its shareholders, and can cause legal and reputational risks.

107. -Company-wide codes serve as a standard for conduct by both the board and key executives, setting the framework for the exercise of judgement in dealing with varying and often conflicting constituencies. At a minimum, the ethical code should set clear limits on the pursuit of private interests, including dealings in the shares of the company. An overall framework for ethical conduct goes beyond compliance with the law, which should always be a fundamental requirement.

D. The board should fulfil certain key functions, including:

1. **Reviewing and guiding corporate strategy, major plans of action, risk management ~~policy~~policies and procedures, annual budgets and business plans; setting performance objectives; monitoring implementation and corporate performance; and overseeing major capital expenditures, acquisitions and divestitures.**

108. -An area of increasing importance for boards and which is closely related to corporate strategy is risk policy. Such policy will involve specifying the types and degree of risk that a company is willing to accept in pursuit of its goals. It is thus a crucial guideline for management that must manage risks to meet the company's desired risk profile.

2. Monitoring the effectiveness of the company's governance practices and making changes as needed.

109. -Monitoring of governance by the board also includes continuous review of the internal structure of the company to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability for management throughout the organisation. In addition to requiring the monitoring and disclosure of corporate governance practices on a regular basis, ~~a number of many~~ countries have moved to recommend, or indeed mandate, self-assessment by boards of their performance as well as performance reviews of individual board members and the Chair and the CEO/Chairman.

3. Selecting, compensating, monitoring and, when necessary, replacing key executives and overseeing succession planning.

110. -In most two tier board systems the supervisory board is also responsible for appointing the management board which will normally comprise most of the key executives.

4. Aligning key executive and board remuneration with the longer term interests of the company and its shareholders.

111. ~~In an increasing number of countries~~ It is regarded as good practice for boards to develop and disclose a remuneration policy statement covering board members and key executives. Such policy statements specify the relationship between remuneration and performance, and include measurable standards that emphasise the longer run interests of the company over short term considerations. Policy statements generally tend to set conditions for payments to board members for extra-board activities, such as consulting. They also often specify terms to be observed by board members and key executives about holding and trading the stock of the company, and the procedures to be followed in granting and re-pricing of options. In some countries, policy also covers the payments to be made when hiring and/or terminating the contract of an executive.

112. -It is considered good practice ~~in an increasing number of countries~~ that remuneration policy and employment contracts for board members and key executives be handled by a special committee of the board comprising either wholly or a majority of independent directors. ~~There are also calls for a remuneration committee that and~~ excludes executives that serve on each others' remuneration committees, which could lead to conflicts of interest. The introduction of malus and claw-back provisions is considered good practice. They grant the company to right to withhold and recover compensation from executives in cases of managerial fraud and other circumstances, such as when the company is required to restate its financial statements due to material noncompliance with financial reporting requirements.

5. Ensuring a formal and transparent board nomination and election process.

113. -These Principles promote an active role for shareholders in the nomination and election of board members. The board has an essential role to play in ensuring that this and other aspects of the nominations and election process are respected. First, while actual procedures for nomination may differ among countries, the board or a nomination committee has a special responsibility to make sure that established procedures are transparent and respected. Second, the board has a key role in ~~identifying potential members for the~~ defining the general or individual profile of board ~~members that the company may need at any given time, considering with~~ the appropriate knowledge, competencies and expertise to complement the existing skills of the board ~~and thereby improve its value adding potential for the company.~~ Third, the board or nomination committee has the responsibility to identify potential candidates to meet desired profiles and propose them to shareholders, and/or consider those candidates advanced by shareholders with

the right to make nominations. In several countries there are increasing calls for an open search processes extending to a broad range of people.

6. Monitoring and managing potential conflicts of interest of management, board members and shareholders, including misuse of corporate assets and abuse in related party transactions.

114. -It is an important function of the board to oversee the internal control systems covering financial reporting and the use of corporate assets and to guard against abusive related party transactions. These functions are ~~sometimes~~ often assigned to the internal auditor which should maintain direct access to the board. Where other corporate officers are responsible such as the general counsel, it is important that they maintain similar reporting responsibilities as the internal auditor.

115. -In fulfilling its control oversight responsibilities it is important for the board to encourage the reporting of unethical/unlawful behaviour without fear of retribution. The existence of a company code of ethics should aid this process which should be underpinned by legal protection for the individuals concerned. ~~In a number of companies either the audit committee or an ethics committee is specified as the~~ contact point for employees who wish to report concerns about unethical or illegal behaviour that might also compromise the integrity of financial statements should be offered by the audit committee or by an ethics committee or equivalent body.

7. Ensuring the integrity of the corporation's accounting and financial reporting systems, including the independent audit, and that appropriate systems of control are in place, in particular, systems for risk management, financial and operational control, and compliance with the law and relevant standards. Large companies should be encouraged to put in place an internal audit function and an audit committee of the board to oversee the effectiveness and integrity of the internal control system.

116. -Ensuring the integrity of the essential reporting and monitoring systems will require the board to set and enforce clear lines of responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation. The board will also need to ensure that there is appropriate oversight by senior management. One way of doing this is through an internal audit system directly reporting to the board. ~~In some jurisdictions it~~ is considered good practice for the internal auditors to report to an independent audit committee of the board or an equivalent body which is also responsible for managing the relationship with the external auditor, thereby allowing a coordinated response by the board. It should also be regarded as good practice for this committee, or equivalent body, to review and report to the board the most critical accounting policies which are the basis for financial reports. However, the board should retain final responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the reporting systems. Some countries have provided for the chair of the board to report on the internal control process. Companies with large or complex risk exposures (financial and non-financial), not only in the financial sector, should consider introducing similar reporting systems, including direct reporting to the board, with regard to risk management.

117. -Companies are also well advised to establish and ensure the effectiveness of internal controls, ethics, and compliance programmes or measures—such as those included in the OECD Good Practice Guidance on Internal Controls, Ethics and Compliance—to comply with applicable laws, regulations, and standards, including statutes criminalising the bribery of foreign public officials, as required under the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, and other forms of bribery and corruption. ~~set up internal programmes and procedures to promote compliance with applicable laws, regulations and standards, including statutes to criminalise bribery of foreign officials that are required to be enacted by the OECD Anti-bribery Convention and measures designed to control other forms of bribery and corruption.~~ Moreover, compliance must also relate to other laws and regulations, as well as relevant international agreements, such as those covering securities, competition, taxation, human rights, and work and safety conditions. Such compliance

programmes will also underpin the company's ethical code. To be effective, the incentive structure of the business needs to be aligned with its ethical and professional standards so that adherence to these values is rewarded and breaches of law are met with dissuasive consequences or penalties. Compliance programmes should also extend ~~where possible~~ to subsidiaries and where possible to third parties, such as agents and other intermediaries, consultants, representatives, distributors, contractors and suppliers, consortia, and joint venture partners.

8. Overseeing the process of disclosure and communications.

118. -The functions and responsibilities of the board and management with respect to disclosure and communication need to be clearly established by the board. In some ~~companies jurisdictions,~~ there is now appointment of an investment relations officer who reports directly to the board is considered good practice for large listed companies.

E. The board should be able to exercise objective independent judgement on corporate affairs.

119. -In order to exercise its duties of monitoring managerial performance, preventing conflicts of interest and balancing competing demands on the corporation, it is essential that the board is able to exercise objective judgement. In the first instance this will mean independence and objectivity with respect to management with important implications for the composition and structure of the board. Board independence in these circumstances usually requires that a sufficient number of board members will need to be independent of management.

120. -In ~~a number of~~ countries with single tier board systems, the objectivity of the board and its independence from management may be strengthened by the separation of the role of chief executive and ~~chairman~~Chair, ~~or, if these roles are combined, by designating a lead non-executive director to convene or chair sessions of the outside directors.~~ Separation of the two posts ~~may be~~ generally regarded as good practice, as it can help to achieve an appropriate balance of power, increase accountability and improve the board's capacity for decision making independent of management. The designation of a lead director is also regarded as a good practice alternative in some jurisdictions if that role is defined with sufficient authority to lead the board in cases where management has clear conflicts. Such mechanisms can also help to ensure high quality governance of the enterprise and the effective functioning of the board.

121. -The Chairman or lead director may, in some countries, be supported by a company secretary. In the case of two tier board systems, consideration should be given to whether corporate governance concerns might arise if there is a tradition for the head of the lower board becoming the Chairman of the Supervisory Board on retirement.

122. -The manner in which board objectivity might be underpinned also depends on the ownership structure of the company. A dominant shareholder has considerable powers to appoint the board and the management. However, in this case, the board still has a fiduciary responsibility to the company and to all shareholders including minority shareholders.

123. -The variety of board structures, ownership patterns and practices in different countries will thus require different approaches to the issue of board objectivity. In many instances objectivity requires that a sufficient number of board members not be employed by the company or its affiliates and not be closely related to the company or its management through significant economic, family or other ties. This does not prevent shareholders from being board members. In others, independence from controlling shareholders or another controlling body will need to be emphasised, in particular if the *ex-ante* rights of minority shareholders are weak and opportunities to obtain redress are limited. This has led to both codes and the law in ~~some-most~~ jurisdictions to call for some board members to be independent of dominant

shareholders, independence extending to not being their representative or having close business ties with them. In other cases, parties such as particular creditors can also exercise significant influence. Where there is a party in a special position to influence the company, there should be stringent tests to ensure the objective judgement of the board.

124. -In defining ~~independent~~ independence for members of the board, some national principles of corporate governance have specified quite detailed presumptions for non-independence which are frequently reflected in listing requirements. While establishing necessary conditions, such 'negative' criteria defining when an individual is *not* regarded as independent can usefully be complemented by 'positive' examples of qualities that will increase the probability of effective independence.

125. -Independent board members can contribute significantly to the decision-making of the board. They can bring an objective view to the evaluation of the performance of the board and management. In addition, they can play an important role in areas where the interests of management, the company and its shareholders may diverge such as executive remuneration, succession planning, changes of corporate control, take-over defences, large acquisitions and the audit function. In order for them to play this key role, it is desirable that boards declare who they consider to be independent and the criterion for this judgement.

- 1. Boards should consider assigning a sufficient number of non-executive board members capable of exercising independent judgement to tasks where there is a potential for conflict of interest. Examples of such key responsibilities are ensuring the integrity of financial and non-financial reporting, the review of related party transactions, nomination of board members and key executives, and board remuneration.**

126. -While the responsibility for financial reporting, remuneration and nomination are frequently ~~those of~~ with the board as a whole, independent non-executive board members can provide additional assurance to market participants that their interests are ~~defended~~ safeguarded. The board ~~may~~ should also consider establishing specific committees to consider questions where there is a potential for conflict of interest. These committees ~~may~~ should require a minimum number or be composed entirely of non-executive members. In some countries, shareholders have direct responsibility for nominating and electing non-executive directors to specialised functions.

- 2. Boards should consider setting up specialised committees to support the full board in performing its functions, particularly in respect to audit, but, depending upon the company's size and risk profile, also in respect to risk management and remuneration. When committees of the board are established, their mandate, composition and working procedures should be well defined and disclosed by the board.**

127. -Where justified in terms of the size of the company and its board, ~~While~~ the use of committees may improve the work of the board, ~~they may also raise questions about the collective responsibility of the board and of individual board members.~~ In order to evaluate the merits of board committees it is ~~therefore~~ important that the market receives a full and clear picture of their purpose, duties and composition. Such information is particularly important in the ~~increasing number of~~ many jurisdictions where boards ~~are~~ have ~~establishing~~ established independent audit committees with powers to oversee the relationship with the external auditor and to act in many cases independently. In large companies, the audit committee should also be able to oversee the effectiveness and integrity of the internal control system. Other such committees include those dealing with nomination ~~and,~~ compensation, and risk. The establishment of additional committees can sometimes help avoid audit committee overload and to allow more board time to be dedicated to those issues. Nevertheless, ~~t~~The accountability of the rest of the board and the board as a

whole should be clear. Disclosure ~~should~~need not extend to committees set up to deal with, for example, confidential commercial transactions.

3. Board members should be able to commit themselves effectively to their responsibilities.

128. ~~-Service on too many boards can interfere with the performance of board members. Companies may wish to consider whether multiple board memberships by the same person are compatible with effective board performance and disclose the information to shareholders.~~ Some countries have limited the number of board positions that can be held. Specific limitations may be less important than ensuring that members of the board enjoy legitimacy and confidence in the eyes of shareholders. Disclosure about other board memberships to shareholders is therefore a key instrument to improve board nominations. Achieving legitimacy would also be facilitated by the publication of attendance records for individual board members (e.g. whether they have missed a significant number of meetings) and any other work undertaken on behalf of the board and the associated remuneration.

~~In order to improve board practices and the performance of its members, an increasing number of jurisdictions are now encouraging companies to engage in board training and voluntary self-evaluation that meets the needs of the individual company. This might include that board members acquire appropriate skills upon appointment, and thereafter remain abreast of relevant new laws, regulations, and changing commercial risks through in-house training and external courses.~~

4. Boards of large companies should regularly carry out evaluations to appraise their performance and assess whether they possess the right mix of background and competences.

129. ~~-In order to improve board practices and the performance of its members, an increasing number of jurisdictions now encourage companies to engage in board training and voluntary board evaluation that meet the needs of the individual company, sometimes with the help of external facilitators to increase objectivity. This might include that board members acquire appropriate skills upon appointment, and thereafter remain abreast of relevant new laws, regulations, and changing commercial and other risks through in-house training and external courses. In order to avoid groupthink and bring a diversity of thought to board discussion, boards should also consider if they collectively possess the right mix of background and competences.~~

130. ~~-Measures such as voluntary targets, disclosure requirements and private initiatives that enhance gender diversity on boards and in senior management should be encouraged.~~

F. In order to fulfil their responsibilities, board members should have access to accurate, relevant and timely information.

131. ~~-Board members require relevant information on a timely basis in order to support their decision-making. Non-executive board members do not typically have the same access to information as key managers within the company. The contributions of non-executive board members to the company can be enhanced by providing access to certain key managers within the company such as, for example, the company secretary, and the internal auditor, and the head of risk management or chief risk officer, and recourse to independent external advice at the expense of the company. In order to fulfil their responsibilities, board members should ensure that they obtain accurate, relevant and timely information. Where companies rely on complex risk management models, board members should be made aware of the possible shortcomings of such models.~~

G. When employee representation on the board is mandated, mechanisms should be developed to guarantee that this representation is exercised effectively and contributes to the enhancement of board skills, information and independence.

132. -When employee representation on boards is mandated by the law or collective agreements, it should be applied in a way that maximises its contribution to the board's independence, competence and information. Employee representatives should have the same duties and responsibilities as all other board members, should act in the best interest of the company and treat all shareholders equitably.

133. -Procedures should be established to facilitate access to information, training and expertise, and the independence of employee board members from the CEO and management. These procedures should also include adequate, transparent appointment procedures, rights to report to employees on a regular basis – provided that board confidentiality requirements are duly respected – training, and clear procedures for managing conflicts of interest. A positive contribution to the board's work will also require acceptance and constructive collaboration by other members of the board as well as by management.

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