

Risk Factors

The Group's businesses, financial condition, results of operations or growth prospects may be affected by risks and uncertainties pertaining to the Group's businesses. The factors set out below are those that the Group believes could result in the Group's businesses, financial condition, results of operations or growth prospects differing materially from expected or historical results. There may be other risks in addition to those shown below which are not known to the Group or which may not be material now but could turn out to be material in the future.

Property Developments

There exist general risks inherent in property development and in the ownership of properties, including, among other things, risks that financing for development may not be available on favourable terms, that construction may not be completed on schedule or within budget, that long-term financing may not be available on completion of construction, that developed properties may not be sold or leased on profitable terms, that there will be intense competition from other developers or property owners which may lead to vacancies or an inability to sell or rent properties on favourable terms, that purchasers or tenants may default, that properties held for rental purpose will need to be renovated, repaired and re-let on a periodic basis, that it may not be possible to renew leases or re-let spaces as existing leases expire, and that the property market conditions are subject to changes in environmental laws and regulations and zoning laws and other governmental rules and fiscal policies. Property values and rental values are also affected by factors such as political developments, governmental regulations and changes in planning or tax laws, levels of interest rates and consumer prices and the overall supply of properties.

Investment in property is generally illiquid, which may limit the ability of the Group in timely realising property assets into cash.

In addition, suitable land of significant size are not easy to obtain due to limited undeveloped land area in Hong Kong. In the Mainland, the supply of substantially all land is controlled by the relevant authorities and a land premium has to be paid to the relevant authorities for acquiring the land use rights. Acquisition of land in other overseas markets may be subject to various other regulatory requirements or restrictions. Future growth prospects of property developers (including the Group) may therefore be affected by the availability and price levels of prime sites in Hong Kong, the Mainland and other overseas markets.

Besides, properties could suffer physical damage by fire or other causes and the Group may be exposed to any potential risks associated with public liability claims, resulting in losses (including loss of rent) which may not be fully compensated for by insurance proceeds, and these may in turn affect the Group's financial condition or results of operations. In addition, there is the possibility of other losses caused by war and earthquakes for which the Group may not obtain insurance at a reasonable cost or at all. Should an uninsured loss or a loss in excess of insured limits occur, payment of compensation may be required and this may affect the returns on capital invested in that property. The Group would also remain liable for any debt or other financial obligation, such as committed capital expenditures, related to that property. In addition, insurance policies will have to be renewed every year and acceptable terms for coverage will have to be negotiated, thus exposing the Group to the volatility of the insurance markets, including the possibility of rate increases.

Industry Trends and Interest Rates

The trends in the industries in which the Group operates, including the property market sentiment and conditions, the property values in Hong Kong, mark to market value of securities investments, the currency environment and interest rates cycles, may pose significant impact on the Group's results. There can be no assurance that the combination of industry trends and interest rates the Group experiences in the future will not adversely affect its financial condition or results of operations.

In particular, income from finance and treasury operations is dependent upon the interest rate and currency environment and market conditions, and therefore there can be no assurance that changes in these conditions will not adversely affect the Group's financial condition or results of operations.

Highly Competitive Markets

The Group's principal business operations face significant competition across the markets in which they operate. New market entrants and intensified price competition among existing market players could adversely affect the Group's financial condition or results of operations. Competition risks faced by the Group include (a) an increasing number of developers undertaking property investment and development in Hong Kong, the Mainland and in other overseas markets, which may affect the market share and returns of the Group; and (b) significant competition and pricing pressure from other developers is expected to continue and may adversely affect the financial performance of the Group's operations.

Currency Fluctuations

The results of the Group is recorded in Hong Kong dollars but its various subsidiaries and associates may receive revenue and incur expenses in other currencies. Any currency fluctuations on translation of the accounts of these subsidiaries and associates and also on the repatriation of earnings, equity investments and loans may therefore impact on the Group's performance. Although currency exposures had been managed by the Group, a depreciation or fluctuation of the currencies in which the Group conducts operations relative to the Hong Kong dollar could adversely affect the Group's financial condition or results of operations.

Strategic Partners

Some of the businesses of the Group are conducted through non wholly-owned subsidiaries and associates in which the Group shares control (in whole or in part) and strategic alliances had been formed by the Group with other strategic or business partners. There can be no assurance that any of these strategic or business partners will continue their relationships with the Group in the future or that the Group will be able to pursue its stated strategies with respect to its non wholly-owned subsidiaries and associates and the markets in which they operate. Furthermore, the joint venture partners may (a) have economic or business interests or goals that are inconsistent with those of the Group; (b) take actions contrary to the Group's policies or objectives; (c) undergo a change of control; (d) experience financial and other difficulties; or (e) be unable or unwilling to fulfil their obligations under the joint venture, which may affect the Group's financial condition or results of operations.

Impact of Local, National and International Regulations

The local business risks in different countries and cities in which the Group operates could have a material impact on the financial condition, results of operations and growth prospects of the businesses in the relevant market. The Group has investments in different countries and cities around the world and the Group is, and may increasingly become, exposed to different and changing political, social, legal and regulatory requirements at the local, national or international level. Also, new policies or measures by governments, whether fiscal, regulatory or other competitive changes, may pose a risk to the overall investment return of the Group's businesses and may delay or prevent the commercial operation of a business with resulting loss of revenues and profit.

Impact of New Accounting Standards

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants ("HKICPA") had issued a number of new and revised Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards ("HKFRS") which were generally effective on or after 1st January, 2005. HKICPA may in the future issue new and revised standards and interpretations. In addition, interpretations on the application of the HKFRS will continue to develop. These factors may require the Group to adopt new accounting policies. The adoption of new accounting policies or new HKFRS might or could have a significant impact on the Group's financial position or results of operations.

Outbreak of Highly Contagious Disease

In 2003, there was an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ("SARS") in Hong Kong, the Mainland and other places. The SARS outbreak had a significant adverse impact on the economies of the affected areas. There can be no assurance that there will not be another significant global outbreak of a severe communicable disease such as avian influenza. If such an outbreak were to occur, it may have a material adverse impact on the operations of the Group and its results of operations may suffer.

Connected Transactions

Hutchison Whampoa Limited ("Hutchison") is also listed on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited. Although the Group believes that its relationship with Hutchison provides it with significant business advantages, the relationship results in various connected transactions under the Rules Governing the Listing of Securities on The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited (the "Listing Rules") and accordingly any transactions entered into between the Group and Hutchison, its subsidiaries or associates are connected transactions, which, unless one of the exemptions is available, will be subject to compliance with the applicable requirements of the Listing Rules, including the issuance of press announcements, the obtaining of independent shareholders' approval at general meetings and disclosure in annual reports and accounts. Independent shareholders' approval requirements may also lead to unpredictable outcomes causing disruptions to as well as increase the risks of the Group's business activities. Independent shareholders may also take actions that are in conflict with the interests of the Group.

The Group's financial condition or results of operations are affected by those of the Hutchison Whampoa Group

The Group owns approximately 49.9% of the Hutchison Whampoa Group which operates in over 50 countries around the world and hence its financial condition and results of operations may be affected by the local market conditions and the economy of the places where it has business operations as well as any litigation against them. The Group's financial condition and results of operations are materially affected by the financial condition and results of operations of the Hutchison Whampoa Group. In addition, the core businesses of the Hutchison Whampoa Group are different from those of the Group, and as a result, the Group is indirectly exposed to the risks facing the Hutchison Whampoa Group.

Past Performance and Forward Looking Statements

The performance and the results of operations of the Group during the past years as contained in this Annual Report are historical in nature and past performance can be no guarantee of future results of the Group. This Annual Report may contain forward-looking statements and opinions that involve risks and uncertainties. Actual results may differ materially from expectations discussed in such forward-looking statements and opinions. Neither the Group nor the Directors, employees or agents of the Group assume (a) any obligation to correct or update the forward-looking statements or opinions contained in this Annual Report; and (b) any liability in the event that any of the forward-looking statements or opinions does not materialise or turns out to be incorrect.