

SAPPI LTD
Form 20-F
December 13, 2010

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[SAPPI FINANCIAL INDEX](#)

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 13, 2010

**UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549**

FORM 20-F

- o **REGISTRATION STATEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 12(b) OR (g) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**
- OR**
- ý **ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**
For the fiscal year ended September 26, 2010
- OR**
- o **TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**
- OR**
- o **SHELL COMPANY REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

Date of event requiring this shell company report.....[]

For the transition period from to
Commission file number 1-14872

SAPPI LIMITED
(Exact name of Registrant as specified in its charter)

Not Applicable
(Translation of Registrant's name into English)

Republic of South Africa
(Jurisdiction of incorporation or organization)

**48 Ameshoff Street
Braamfontein
Johannesburg 2001
Republic of South Africa**
(Address of principal executive offices)

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Sappi Limited
P.O Box 31560,
Braamfontein, 2017, South Africa

(Name, Telephone, E-mail and / or Facsimile number and Address of Company Contact Person)

Securities registered or to be registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act.

American Depositary Shares, evidenced by
American Depositary Receipts, each representing
1 Ordinary Share
(Title of each class)

New York Stock Exchange
Ordinary Shares, par value R1.00 per Share*
(Name of each exchange on which registered)

Securities registered or to be registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act.

None

Securities for which there is a reporting obligation pursuant to Section 15(d) of the Act.

None

Indicate the number of outstanding shares of each of the issuer's classes of capital or common stock as of the close of the period covered by the annual report.

541,446,223 Ordinary Shares

19,961,476 "A" Ordinary Shares

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.

YES **NO**

If this report is an annual or transition report, indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

YES **NO**

Note Checking the box above will not relieve any registrant required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 from their obligations under those Sections.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days.

YES **NO**

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Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files.)

YES **NO**

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, or a non-accelerated filer. See definition of "accelerated filer and large accelerated filer" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer

Accelerated filer

Non-accelerated filer

Indicate by check mark which basis of accounting the registrant has used to prepare the financial statements included in this filing:

U.S GAAP

International Financial Reporting Standards as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board

Other

If "Other" has been checked in response to the previous question, indicate by check mark which financial statements item the registrant has elected to follow.

ITEM 17

ITEM 18

If this is an annual report, indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act).

YES **NO**

(APPLICABLE ONLY TO ISSUERS INVOLVED IN BANKRUPTCY PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS)

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has filed all documents and reports required to be filed by Sections 12, 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 subsequent to the distribution of securities under a plan confirmed by a court.

YES **NO**

*

Not for trading but only in connection with the registration of the American Depositary Shares, pursuant to the requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<u>Our Use of Terms and Conventions in this Annual Report</u>	iv
<u>Accounting Periods and Principles</u>	v
<u>Currency of Presentation and Exchange Rates</u>	v
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	v
<u>PART I</u>	
<u>Item 1. Identity of Directors, Senior Management and Advisers</u>	1
<u>Item 2. Offer Statistics and Expected Timetable</u>	1
<u>Item 3. Key Information</u>	1
<u>Selected Financial Data</u>	1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	3
<u>Item 4. Information on the Company</u>	14
<u>History and Development of the Company</u>	14
<u>Business Overview</u>	15
<u>Sappi Fine Paper</u>	24
<u>Sappi Southern Africa</u>	32
<u>Supply Requirements</u>	38
<u>Environmental and Safety Matters</u>	43
<u>Organizational Structure</u>	47
<u>Property, Plant and Equipment</u>	48
<u>Item 4A. Unresolved Staff Comments</u>	49
<u>Item 5. Operating and Financial Review and Prospects</u>	50
<u>Company and Business Overview</u>	50
<u>Principal Factors Impacting our Group Results</u>	51
<u>Markets</u>	53
<u>Currency Fluctuations</u>	58
<u>Inflation and Interest Rates</u>	60
<u>South African Economic and Political Environment</u>	61
<u>Environmental Matters</u>	64
<u>Operating Results</u>	64
<u>Liquidity and Capital Resources</u>	82
<u>Off-Balance Sheet Arrangements</u>	94
<u>Contractual Obligations</u>	95
<u>Research and Development, Patents and Licenses, etc.</u>	96
<u>Share Buy Backs</u>	98
<u>Dividends</u>	98
<u>Mill Closures, Acquisitions, Dispositions, Impairment, Joint Venture and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment</u>	98
<u>Pensions and Post-retirement Benefits Other than Pensions</u>	100
<u>Insurance</u>	102
<u>Critical Accounting Policies and Estimates</u>	102
<u>Adoption of Accounting Standards in Fiscal 2010</u>	107
<u>Item 6. Directors, Senior Management and Employees</u>	109
<u>Directors and Senior Management</u>	109
<u>Compensation</u>	117
<u>Board Practices</u>	117
<u>Corporate Governance</u>	118
<u>Employees</u>	119
<u>Share Ownership</u>	119

	Page
	122
<u>Item 7.</u>	<u>Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions</u> <u>124</u>
	<u>Major Shareholders</u> <u>124</u>
	<u>Related Party Transactions</u> <u>126</u>
	<u>Interests of Experts and Counsel</u> <u>127</u>
<u>Item 8.</u>	<u>Financial Information</u> <u>128</u>
	<u>Consolidated Statements and Other Financial Information</u> <u>128</u>
	<u>Legal Proceedings</u> <u>128</u>
	<u>Dividends</u> <u>129</u>
	<u>Significant Changes</u> <u>130</u>
<u>Item 9.</u>	<u>The Offer and Listing</u> <u>131</u>
	<u>Offer and Listing Details</u> <u>131</u>
	<u>Markets</u> <u>132</u>
<u>Item 10.</u>	<u>Additional Information</u> <u>133</u>
	<u>Memorandum and Articles of Association</u> <u>133</u>
	<u>South African Companies Act, 2008</u> <u>141</u>
	<u>Material Contracts</u> <u>142</u>
	<u>Exchange Controls</u> <u>145</u>
	<u>Taxation</u> <u>147</u>
	<u>Documents on Display</u> <u>155</u>
<u>Item 11.</u>	<u>Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk</u> <u>156</u>
<u>Item 12.</u>	<u>Description of Securities Other than Equity Securities</u> <u>158</u>
<u>PART II</u>	
<u>Item 13.</u>	<u>Defaults, Dividend Arrearages and Delinquencies</u> <u>159</u>
<u>Item 14.</u>	<u>Material Modifications to the Rights of Security Holders and Use of Proceeds</u> <u>159</u>
<u>Item 15.</u>	<u>Controls and Procedures</u> <u>159</u>
	<u>Disclosure Controls and Procedures</u> <u>159</u>
	<u>Management's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting</u> <u>159</u>
	<u>Attestation Report of the Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm</u> <u>159</u>
	<u>Changes in Internal Control over Financial Reporting</u> <u>161</u>
<u>Item 16A.</u>	<u>Audit Committee Financial Expert</u> <u>161</u>
<u>Item 16B.</u>	<u>Code of Ethics</u> <u>161</u>
<u>Item 16C.</u>	<u>Principal Accountant Fees and Services</u> <u>161</u>
<u>Item 16D.</u>	<u>Exemptions from the Listing Standards for Audit Committees</u> <u>162</u>
<u>Item 16E.</u>	<u>Purchases of Equity Securities by the Issuer and Affiliated Purchaser</u> <u>162</u>
<u>Item 16F.</u>	<u>Change in Registrant's Certifying Accountant</u> <u>162</u>
<u>Item 16G.</u>	<u>Corporate Governance</u> <u>162</u>
<u>PART III</u>	
<u>Item 17.</u>	<u>Financial Statements</u> <u>163</u>
<u>Item 18.</u>	<u>Financial Statements</u> <u>163</u>
<u>Item 19.</u>	<u>Exhibits</u> <u>164</u>

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OUR USE OF TERMS AND CONVENTIONS IN THIS ANNUAL REPORT

Unless otherwise specified or the context requires otherwise in this Annual Report on Form 20-F ("Annual Report"):

References to "Sappi", "Sappi Group", "Sappi group", "Group", "we", "us" and "our" are to Sappi Limited together with its subsidiaries including, unless otherwise indicated, the Acquired Business (as defined below);

References to the "Acquired Business" and the "Acquisition" are to the coated graphic paper business and certain related uncoated graphic paper business activities of M-real Corporation and their acquisition by us on December 31, 2008;

References to the "Refinancing" are to the issuance of our € 350 million and US\$ 300 million senior secured notes due 2014 (the "2014 Bond") and the use of the proceeds therefrom, together with a portion of available cash, to repay drawings under our existing € 600 million revolving credit facility, transaction costs and other indebtedness, the establishment of a new € 209 million revolving credit facility (the "Revolving Credit Facility") and the replacement of our existing € 400 million Österreichische Kontrollbank Aktiengesellschaft ("OeKB") term loan facility by an amended and restated € 400 million OeKB term loan facility (the "OeKB Term Loan Facility");

References to "BEE" are to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, or Black Economic Empowerment, which arises as a result of following South African legislation: the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998); the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998); the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (No. 5 of 2000); and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (No. 53 of 2003);

References to "IFRS" are to the International Financial Reporting Standards, as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board ("IASB");

References to "southern Africa" are to the Republic of South Africa, the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Namibia and the Republic of Botswana;

References to "North America" are to the United States, Canada and the Caribbean;

References to "Latin America" are to the countries located on the continent of South America and Mexico;

References to "Rand", "ZAR" and "R" are to South African Rand, the currency of South Africa, and references to "SA cents" are to South African cents;

References to "US dollar(s)", "dollar(s)", "US\$", "\$" and "US cents" are to United States dollars and cents, the currency of the United States;

References to "euro", "EUR" and "€" are to the currency of those countries in the European Union that form part of the common currency of the euro;

References to "UK pounds sterling" and "GBP" are to United Kingdom pounds sterling, the currency of the United Kingdom;

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References to "m²" are to square meters and references to "hectares" or "ha" are to a land area of 10,000 square meters or approximately 2.47 acres;

References to "tonnes" are to metric tonnes (approximately 2,204.6 pounds or 1.1 short tonnes);

References to "market share" are based upon sales volumes in a specified geographic region during the fiscal year ended September 26, 2010;

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References to "NBSK" are to northern bleached softwood kraft pulp frequently used as a pricing benchmark for pulp;

References to "groundwood" or to "mechanical" are to pulp manufactured using a mechanical process, or where applicable to paper, made using a high proportion of such pulp;

References to "woodfree paper" are to paper made from chemical pulp, which is pulp made from wood fiber that has been produced in a chemical process; and

References to "PM" are to individual paper machines.

Except as otherwise indicated, in this Annual Report the amounts of "capacity" or "production capacity" of our facilities or machines are based upon our best estimates of production capacity at the date of filing of this Annual Report. Actual production by machines may differ from production capacity as a result of products produced, variations in product mix and other factors.

Certain market share information and other statements presented herein regarding our position relative to our competitors with respect to the manufacture or distribution of particular products are not based on published statistical data or information obtained from independent third parties, but reflects our best estimates. We have based these estimates upon information obtained from our customers, trade and business organizations and associations and other contacts in our industries.

Except as otherwise indicated in this Annual Report any reference to capacity, production capacity, market share information and data of a similar nature include the impact of the Acquired Business, which was acquired on December 31, 2008.

Unless otherwise provided in this Annual Report, trademarks identified by ® are registered trademarks of Sappi Limited or our subsidiaries.

ACCOUNTING PERIODS AND PRINCIPLES

Unless otherwise specified, all references in this Annual Report to a "fiscal year" and "year ended" of Sappi Limited refer to a twelve-month fiscal period. All references in this Annual Report to fiscal 2010, 2009, and 2008, or the years ended September 2010, 2009 or 2008 refer to Sappi Limited's twelve-month fiscal periods ended on September 26, 2010, September 27, 2009 and September 28, 2008, respectively; references in this Annual Report to fiscal 2010 refer to the period beginning September 28, 2009 and ending September 26, 2010.

Our annual financial statements as of September 2010 and 2009 and for each of the three years in the period ended September 2010 are hereinafter referred to as the Group Annual Financial Statements and have been included elsewhere in this Annual Report. Our Group Annual Financial Statements have been prepared in conformity with IFRS as issued by the IASB.

CURRENCY OF PRESENTATION AND EXCHANGE RATES

We publish our Group Annual Financial Statements and all financial data presented in this Annual Report in US dollars on a nominal (non-inflation adjusted) basis. For information regarding the conversion of certain financial information to US dollars in fiscals 2010, 2009 and 2008, see note 2 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report.

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

In order to utilize the "Safe Harbor" provisions of the United States Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (the "Reform Act"), we are providing the following cautionary statement. Except for historical information contained herein, statements contained in this Annual Report may constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the Reform Act.

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The words "believe", "anticipate", "expect", "intend", "estimate", "plan", "assume", "positioned", "will", "may", "should", "risk" and other similar expressions, which are predictions of or indicate future events and future trends, which do not relate to historical matters, identify forward-looking statements. In addition, this document includes forward-looking statements relating to our potential exposure to various types of market risks, such as interest rate risk, foreign exchange rate risk and commodity price risk. You should not rely on forward-looking statements because they involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors which are in some cases beyond our control and may cause our actual results, performance or achievements to differ materially from anticipated future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements (and from past results, performance or achievements). Certain factors that may cause such differences include but are not limited to:

the highly cyclical nature of the pulp and paper industry (and the factors that contribute to such cyclicity, such as levels of demand, production capacity, production, input costs including raw material, energy and employee costs, and pricing);

the impact on our business of the global economic downturn;

unanticipated production disruptions (including as a result of planned or unexpected power outages);

changes in environmental, tax and other laws and regulations;

adverse changes in the markets for our products;

consequences of our leverage, including as a result of adverse changes in credit markets that affect our ability to raise capital when needed;

adverse changes in the political situation and economy in the countries in which we operate or the effect of governmental efforts to address present or future economic or social problems;

the impact of investments, acquisitions and dispositions (including related financing), any delays, unexpected costs or other problems experienced in connection with dispositions or with integrating acquisitions and achieving expected savings and synergies; and

currency fluctuations.

These factors are fully discussed in this Annual Report. For further discussion on these factors, see "Item 3 Key Information Selected Financial Data", "Item 3 Key Information Risk Factors", "Item 4 Information on the Company", "Item 5 Operating and Financial Review and Prospects", "Item 10 Additional Information Exchange Controls" and note 29 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report. You are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are made as of the date of the filing of this Annual Report and are not intended to give any assurance as to future results. We undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any of these forward-looking statements, whether to reflect new information or future events or circumstances or otherwise.

PART I

ITEM 1. IDENTITY OF DIRECTORS, SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND ADVISERS

Not applicable.

ITEM 2. OFFER STATISTICS AND EXPECTED TIMETABLE

Not applicable.

ITEM 3. KEY INFORMATION

Selected Financial Data

The selected financial data set forth below as of September 2010, 2009 and 2008 has been derived from our Group Annual Financial Statements and the notes thereto, which are included elsewhere in this Annual Report. The selected financial data set forth below as of September 2007 and 2006, has been derived from our Group Annual Financial Statements for such periods which are not presented herein.

	Year Ended September				
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
	(US\$ million, except per share data)				
Group Income Statement Data:					
Sales ⁽¹⁾	6,572	5,369	5,863	5,304	4,941
Operating profit (loss)	341	(73)	314	383	125
Net profit (loss) ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾	66	(177)	102	202	(4)
Basic earnings (loss) per share (US cents)	13	(37)	28	56	(1)
Diluted earnings (loss) per share (US cents)	13	(37)	28	55	(1)
Dividends per share (US cents)			16	32	30

	Year Ended September				
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
	(US\$ million)				
Group Balance Sheet Data:					
Total assets	7,184	7,297	6,109	6,344	5,517
Net assets	1,896	1,794	1,605	1,816	1,386
Total long-term borrowings	2,317	2,726	1,832	1,828	1,634
Shareholders' equity	1,896	1,794	1,605	1,816	1,386

	Year Ended September				
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
	(US\$ million, except number of shares data)				
Other Information:					
Operating profit excluding special items ⁽⁵⁾		339	33	366	313
Weighted average number of ordinary shares in issue (in million) ⁽⁶⁾		516.7	482.6	362.2	360.6
Number of ordinary shares in issue at fiscal year end (in million) ⁽⁶⁾		519.5	515.7	229.2	228.5
				228.5	227.0

(1)

Sales are defined in note 2.2.12 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report.

(2)

See note 33 of the Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report for further discussion of the M-real Corporation Acquisition which closed on December 31, 2008.

- (3) In the third quarter of fiscal 2010 the Group revised its methodology for all immature timber and mature timber resulting in US\$ 28 million positive increase in profit. See note 2 of the Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report. In fiscal 2010 the Group entered into a BEE transaction resulting in a US\$ 23 million charge to profit. See note 28 of the Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report for further details.
- (4) During the fiscal years 2010 to 2008, the Group recorded a (US\$ 10 million), US\$ 79 million, US\$ 119 million asset (impairment reversals) impairments. See note 4 and note 9 of the Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report for further details.
- (5) In compliance with the U.S. Securities Exchange Commission ("SEC") rules relating to "Conditions for Use of Non-GAAP Financial Measures", we have reconciled operating profit (loss) excluding special items to net profit (loss) rather than operating profit. Operating profit (loss) excluding special items represents earnings before taxation, interest (net finance costs), and special items. Net finance costs include: gross interest paid; interest received (including discounts on early redemption of loans); interest capitalized; net foreign exchange gains; and net fair value adjustments on interest rate financial instruments. See the Group Income Statement, included elsewhere in this Annual Report, for an explanation of the computation of net finance costs. Special items cover those items which management believe are material by nature or amount to the operating results and require separate disclosure. Such items would generally include profit or loss on disposal of property, investments and businesses, asset impairments, restructuring charges, non-recurring integration costs related to acquisitions, financial impacts of natural disasters, non-cash gains or losses on the price fair value adjustment of plantations and alternative fuel mixture tax credits receivable in cash. We use operating profit (loss) excluding special items as an internal measure of performance to benchmark and compare performance, both between our own operations and as against other companies. Operating profit (loss) excluding special items is a measure used by the Group, together with measures of performance under IFRS, to compare the relative performance of operations in planning, budgeting and reviewing the performances of various businesses. We believe operating profit (loss) excluding special items is a useful measure of financial performance in addition to net profit, operating profit and other profitability measures under IFRS because it facilitates operating performance comparisons from period to period and company to company. For these reasons, we believe operating profit (loss) excluding special items and similar measures are regularly used by the investment community as a means of comparison of companies in our industry. Different companies and analysts may calculate operating profit (loss) excluding special items differently, so making comparisons among companies on this basis should be done very carefully. Operating profit (loss) excluding special items is not a measure of performance under IFRS and should not be considered in isolation or construed as a substitute for operating profit or net profit as an indicator of the company's operations in accordance with IFRS.

The following table reconciles operating profit (loss) excluding special items to net profit (loss).

	Year Ended September				
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
	(US\$ million)				
Net profit (loss)	66	(177)	102	202	(4)
Taxation charge (benefit)	20	(41)	86	47	(1)
Net finance costs	255	145	126	134	130
Operating profit (loss)	341	(73)	314	383	125

Special items (gains) losses	(2)	106	52	(70)	(34)
Operating profit (loss) excluding special items	339	33	366	313	91
Plantation price fair value adjustment	(31)	67	(120)	54	34
Restructuring provisions raised (released)	46	34	41	7	(50)
(Profit) loss on disposal of property, plant & equipment	(5)	(1)	(5)	26	
Pension restructuring gain					28
Asset (impairment reversals) impairments	(10)	79	119		31
Alternative fuel mixture tax credits	(51)	(87)			
Integration costs(2)		3			
BEE transaction charge	23				
Fire, flood, storm and related events	26	11	17	(17)	(9)
Total Special items	(2)	106	52	(70)	(34)

- (6) Net of Treasury shares, which include "A" ordinary shares, as described in note 17 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report.

Risk Factors

In addition to other information contained in this Annual Report, you should carefully consider the following factors before deciding to invest in our ordinary shares and American Depository Shares ("ADSs"). However, the risks and uncertainties our Company faces are not limited to those described below. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently believe to be immaterial may also adversely affect our business. Our business, financial condition and results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks, resulting in a decline in the trading price of our ordinary shares and ADSs.

Risks Related to Our Industry

We operate in a cyclical industry, which has in the past resulted in substantial fluctuations in our results.

The markets for our pulp and paper products are commodity markets to a significant extent and are significantly affected by changes in industry capacity and output levels and by cyclical changes in the world economy. As a result of periodic supply / demand imbalances in the pulp and paper industry, these markets historically have been highly cyclical, with volatile pulp and paper prices. In addition, recent turmoil in the capital and credit markets has led to decreased availability of credit, which is having an adverse effect on the world economy and consequently has already affected, and may continue to adversely affect the markets for our products. The timing and magnitude of price increases or decreases in the pulp and paper market have generally varied by region and by type of pulp and paper.

Despite a relatively high level of pulp integration on a Group-wide basis, a significant increase in the prices for pulp or pulpwood could adversely affect our non-integrated and partially integrated operations if they are unable to raise paper prices sufficiently to offset the effects of increased costs. Other input cost increases including (but not limited to) energy and chemicals may affect our operations if we are unable to raise paper prices sufficiently.

The majority of our woodfree paper sales consist of sales to merchants. However, the pricing of products for merchant sales can generally be changed with between 30 to 90 days' advance notice to the merchant. Sales to converters may be subject to longer notice periods for price changes. Such notice periods generally would not exceed 6 to 12 months. In southern Africa, we have entered into longer-term fixed-price agreements of between 6 to 12 months duration for primarily packaging paper and newsprint sales with domestic customers. Such agreements accounted for approximately 5% of consolidated sales during fiscal 2010.

Most of our chemical cellulose sales contracts are multi-year contracts. However, the pricing is generally based on a formula linked to the NBSK price and reset on a quarterly basis.

As a result of the short-term duration of paper and chemical cellulose pricing arrangements, we are subject to cyclical decreases in market prices for these products. A downturn in paper or chemical cellulose prices could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

For further information, see "Item 4 Information on the Company Business Overview".

Global economic conditions could adversely affect our business, results of operations and financial condition.

During the latter half of fiscal 2008 and fiscal 2009, demand for coated Woodfree paper declined and pulp prices and demand decreased due to the effects of a global economic recession. These trends have negatively impacted our results of operations during fiscal 2009. Despite the aggressive measures taken by governments and central banks thus far, the economic recovery has been extremely slow. Also,

a significant risk remains that these measures may not prevent the global economy from falling back into an even deeper and longer lasting recession or even a depression, including as a result of turmoil in the sovereign debt markets. This recession is due to credit conditions impacted by the subprime mortgage crisis and other factors, including slower economic activity, inflation and deflation concerns, reduced corporate profits, reduced or canceled capital spending, adverse business conditions and liquidity concerns resulting in significant recessionary pressures, increased unemployment and lower business and consumer confidence. Even though our operational results improved during fiscal 2010, we are still impacted by the slow recovery of the world economies. Furthermore, we are unable to predict the timing and/or rate of such a recovery. Finally, we cannot predict the timing or duration of any other downturn in the economy that may occur in the future.

The markets for pulp and paper products are highly competitive, and some of our competitors have advantages that may adversely affect our ability to compete with them.

We compete against a large number of pulp and paper producers located around the world. A recent trend towards consolidation in the pulp and paper industry has created larger, more focused pulp and paper companies. Some of these companies benefit from greater financial resources or operate mills that are lower cost producers of pulp and paper products than our mills, or are government subsidized. Some of our competitors have advantages over us, including lower raw material, energy and labor costs and fewer environmental and governmental regulations to comply with. As a result, we cannot assure you that each of our mills will remain competitive. Furthermore, we cannot assure you that we will be able to take advantage of consolidation opportunities which may arise, or that any failure to exploit opportunities for growth would not make us less competitive. Increased competition, including a decrease in import duties in accordance with the terms of free trade agreements, could cause us to lose market share, increase expenditures or reduce pricing, any of which could have a material adverse effect on the results of our operations. In addition, competition may result in our inability to increase selling prices of our products sufficiently or in time to offset the effects of increased costs without losing market share and aggressive pricing by competitors may force us to decrease prices in an attempt to maintain market share.

The cost of complying with environmental, health and safety laws may be significant to our business.

Our operations are subject to a wide range of environmental, health and safety laws in the various jurisdictions in which we operate. Such laws govern, among other things, the control of emissions and discharges, the management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, the cleanup of contamination, the purchase and use of safety equipment, workplace safety training and the monitoring of workplace hazards.

Although we strive to ensure that our facilities comply with all applicable environmental laws and permits required for our operations, we have in the past been and may in the future be subject to governmental enforcement actions for failure to comply with environmental requirements. Impacts from historical operations, including the land disposal of waste materials, or our own activities may require costly investigation and cleanup. In addition, we could become subject to environmental liabilities resulting from personal injury, property damage or natural resources damage. Expenditures to comply with future environmental requirements and the costs related to any potential environmental liabilities and claims could have a material adverse effect on our business and financial condition.

We expect to continue to incur significant expenditures and may face operational constraints to maintain compliance with applicable environmental laws, to upgrade equipment at our mills and to meet new regulatory requirements, including those in the United States, southern Africa and Europe.

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For further information, see "Item 4 Information on the Company Environmental and Safety Matters".

The availability and cost of insurance cover can vary considerably from year to year as a result of events beyond our control, and this can result in our paying higher premiums and periodically being unable to maintain the levels or types of insurance carried.

The insurance market remains cyclical and catastrophic events can change the state of the insurance market, leading to sudden and unexpected increases in premiums and deductibles and unavailability of coverage due to reasons totally unconnected with our business. In addition, recent turmoil and volatility in the global financial markets may adversely affect the insurance market. This may result in some of the insurers in our insurance portfolio failing and being unable to pay their share of claims.

Although we have successfully negotiated the renewal of our 2010 insurance cover at rates similar to those of 2009 and self-insured deductibles for any one property damage occurrence have remained at US\$ 25 million, with an unchanged aggregate limit of US\$ 40 million, we are unable to predict whether past or future events will result in less favorable terms. For property damage and business interruption, there generally does not seem to be cost effective cover available to full value; however, we believe that the loss limit cover of US\$ 1 billion should be adequate for what we have determined as the reasonably foreseeable loss for any single claim. From fiscal 2011 our property damage insurance policy will be euro denominated as most of our assets are based in euro denominated jurisdictions.

Sappi places the insurance for its plantations on a stand-alone basis into international insurance markets. While the impact of widespread fires on our plantations in fiscal 2010 was substantially less than fiscal years 2007 through 2009, we are unable to assure you that this will remain so for the foreseeable future.

While we believe our insurance programs provide adequate coverage for reasonably foreseeable losses, we continue working on improved risk management to lower the risk of incurring losses from uncontrolled incidents. We are unable to assure you that actual losses will not exceed our insurance coverage or that such excess will not be material.

New technologies or changes in consumer preferences may affect our ability to compete successfully.

We believe that new technologies or novel processes may emerge and that existing technologies may be further developed in the fields in which we operate. These technologies or processes could have an impact on production methods or on product quality in these fields. Unexpected rapid changes in employed technologies or the development of novel processes that affect our operations and product range could render the technologies we utilize or the products we produce obsolete or less competitive in the future. Difficulties in assessing new technologies may impede us from implementing them and competitive pressures may force us to implement these new technologies at a substantial cost. Any such development could materially and adversely impact our results of operations.

Consumer preferences may change as a result of the availability of alternative products or of services including less expensive product grades, electronic media or the internet, or as a result of environmental activist pressure from consumers, all of which could negatively impact consumption of our products.

Risks Related to Our Business

Our significant indebtedness may impair our financial and operating flexibility.

Our significant level of indebtedness and the terms of our indebtedness could negatively impact our business and liquidity. As of September 2010, our interest bearing debt (long-term and short-term interest bearing debt plus overdraft, less cash on hand) was US\$ 2,221 million. While reduction of our indebtedness is one of our priorities, opportunities to grow within our businesses will continue to be evaluated, and the financing of any future acquisition or capital investment may include the incurrence of additional indebtedness.

The level of our debt has important consequences, including:

our ability to obtain additional financing may be limited, which could limit, among other things, our ability to exploit growth opportunities;

a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations may be required to make debt service payments;

we are exposed to increases in interest rates because a portion of our debt bears interest at variable rates;

we may be more leveraged than certain of our competitors;

we may be more vulnerable to economic downturns and adverse changes in our business;

our ability to withstand competitive pressure may be more limited; and

certain of our financing arrangements contain covenants and conditions that may restrict the activities of certain Group companies.

As a result of the Refinancing, which was implemented during fiscal 2009, the average time to maturity of our debt was extended. We also expect to continue refinancing other renewable facilities that mature under our funding arrangements and bilateral banking facilities.

Our ability to refinance our debt, incur additional debt, the terms of our existing and additional debt and our liquidity could be affected by a number of adverse developments. In the third quarter of fiscal 2008, the global debt markets were subject to significant pressure triggered by the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market in the U.S. This liquidity crunch continued through calendar 2009, leading to unprecedented volatility in the financial markets, an acute contraction in the availability of credit, including in interbank lending, and the failure of a number of leading financial institutions. Although this situation has improved somewhat during the 2010 fiscal year, credit restrictions are still in place and available credit continues to be issued at a premium.

Changes in investment markets, including changes in interest rates, exchange rates and returns from equity, property and other investments, have resulted in general economic conditions slightly improving in the current year. However in light of previously worsening economic conditions, certain government bodies and central banks worldwide have undertaken unprecedented intervention programs, the effects of which remain uncertain. In addition, since 2006 the Group's credit ratings have been downgraded to sub-investment grade by Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Moody's. Adverse developments in the credit markets and in our credit rating, as well as other future adverse developments such as renewed deterioration in the financial markets, including as a result of turmoil in the sovereign debt markets and a renewed worsening of general economic conditions, may negatively impact our ability to issue additional debt as well as the amount and terms of the debt we are able to issue. Our liquidity will be adversely affected if we must repay all or a portion of our maturing debt from available cash or through use of our existing liquidity facilities. In addition, our results of operations will be adversely impacted to the extent the terms of the debt we are able to issue are less favorable than the

terms of the debt being refinanced. It is also possible that we will need to agree to covenants that place additional restrictions on our business.

We are subject to South African exchange controls, which may restrict the transfer of funds directly or indirectly between our subsidiaries or between the parent company and our subsidiaries and can restrict activities of our subsidiaries. See "Item 10 Exchange Controls". We may also incur tax costs in connection with these transfers of funds. These exchange controls have affected the geographic distribution of our debt. As a result, acquisitions in the United States and Europe were financed with indebtedness incurred by companies in those regions. As a consequence, our ability or the ability of any of our subsidiaries to make scheduled payments on their debt will depend on its financial and operating performance, which will depend on various factors beyond our control, such as prevailing economic and competitive conditions. If we or any of our subsidiaries are unable to achieve operating results or otherwise obtain access to funds sufficient to enable us to meet our debt service obligations, we could face substantial liquidity problems. As a result, we might need to delay investments or dispose of material assets or operations. The timing of and the proceeds to be realized from any such disposition would depend upon circumstances at the time.

The current global liquidity and credit crises could have a negative impact on our major customers which in turn could materially adversely affect our results of operations and financial position.

Despite a recent improvement in general economic conditions the global liquidity and credit crises continue to have a negative impact on businesses around the world. The impact of these crises on our major customers cannot be predicted and may be quite severe. A disruption in the ability of our significant customers to access sources of liquidity could cause serious disruptions or an overall deterioration of their businesses which could lead to a significant reduction in their future orders of our products and the inability or failure on their part to meet their payment obligations to us, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations and financial position.

We require a significant amount of financing to fund our business and our ability to generate sufficient cash depends on many factors, some of which are beyond our control.

Our ability to fund our working capital, capital expenditure and research and development requirements, to engage in future acquisitions, to make payments on our debt, to fund post-retirement benefit programs and to pay dividends will depend upon our future operating performance. Our principal sources of liquidity are cash generated from operations and availability under our credit facilities and other debt arrangements. Our ability to generate cash depends, to some extent, on general economic, financial, competitive, market, regulatory and other factors, many of which are beyond our control. Our cash flow from operations may be adversely impacted by the downturn in worldwide economic conditions, which has resulted in a decline in global demand for our products and a softening of prices for some of our products. The availability of debt financing has also been negatively impacted by the global credit crisis.

Our business may not generate sufficient cash flow from operations and additional debt and equity financing may not be available to us in a sufficient amount to enable us to meet our liquidity needs. If our future cash flows from operations and other capital resources are insufficient to fund our liquidity needs, we may be required to obtain additional debt or equity financing, refinance our indebtedness, reduce or delay our capital expenditures and research and development or to decrease the amount of the annual dividend. We may not be able to accomplish these alternatives on a timely basis or on satisfactory terms. The failure to do so could have an adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Fluctuations in the value of currencies, particularly the Rand and the euro, in relation to the US dollar, have in the past had and could in the future have a significant impact on our earnings in these currencies.

Exchange rate fluctuations have in the past, and may in the future, affect the competitiveness of our products in relation to the products of pulp and paper companies based in other countries.

Fluctuations in the exchange rate between currencies, particularly the Rand and euro, in relation to the US dollar have in the past significantly affected and could in the future significantly affect our earnings, inter alia, the competitiveness of our exports, depressing landed prices of imported competitors products, and increasing the costs of our raw materials.

Since the adoption of the euro by the European Union on January 1, 1999 (when the euro was trading at approximately US\$ 1.18 per euro), it has fluctuated against the US dollar, reaching a low of approximately US\$ 0.83 per euro in October 2000 before trading at approximately US\$ 1.35, US\$ 1.47 and US\$ 1.46 per euro at the end of fiscal 2010, 2009 and 2008, respectively.

In recent years, the value of the Rand against the US dollar has fluctuated considerably, moving against the US dollar from a low of approximately R13.90 per US dollar in December 2001 to approximately R7.02, R7.41 and R8.08 per US dollar at the end of fiscal 2010, 2009 and 2008, respectively.

For further information, see notes 2 and 29 to our Group Annual Financial Statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report and "Item 5 Operating and Financial Review and Prospects Currency Fluctuations".

There are risks relating to the countries in which we operate that could impact our earnings or affect your investment in our Company.

We own manufacturing operations in six countries in Europe, two states in the United States and in South Africa, have an investment in a joint venture in China and own plantations in South Africa and Swaziland. As a result, our operations are subject to various economic, fiscal, monetary, regulatory, operational and political conditions. Our presence in these countries exposes us to risks such as material changes in laws and regulations, political, financial and social changes and instabilities, exchange controls, risks related to relationships with local partners and potential inconsistencies between commercial practices, regulations and business models in different countries. The occurrence of such events could have an adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

For further information see "Item 5 Operating and Financial Review and Prospects South African Economic and Political Environment" and "Item 10 Additional Information Exchange Controls".

We face certain risks in dealing with HIV / AIDS which may have an adverse effect on our southern African operations.

There is a serious problem with HIV / AIDS infection among our southern African workforce, as there is in southern Africa generally. The HIV / AIDS infection rate of our southern African workforce is expected to increase over the next decade. The costs and lost workers' time associated with HIV / AIDS may adversely affect our southern African operations.

For further information, see "Item 5 Operating and Financial Review and Prospects South African Economic and Political Environment".

The inability to recover increasing input costs through increased prices of our products has had, and may continue to have, an adverse impact on our profitability.

The selling prices of the majority of the products manufactured and the purchase prices of many of the raw materials we use generally fluctuate in correlation with global commodity cycles. We have in the past experienced, and may in the future experience, increasing costs of a number of raw materials due to global trends beyond our control. Electricity generation companies are competing for the same raw material, namely wood and wood chips, in the same markets as us, driving prices upwards, especially during winter in the Northern hemisphere. Although oil prices have decreased from the historical highs of 2008, they could return to high levels in the foreseeable future because of, among other things, political instability in the oil-producing regions of the world. This impacts the oil-based commodities required by our business in the areas of energy (including electricity), transport and chemicals.

As occurred in previous years, a major potential consequence of the increase in the price of input commodities is our inability to counter this effect through increased selling prices. This results in reduced operating profit, and has a negative impact on business planning.

While we continue to implement procedures to reduce our cost of commodity inputs, other than maintaining a high level of pulp integration, the hedging techniques we apply on our raw materials and products are on a small scale and short-term in nature. Moreover, in the event of significant increases in the prices of pulp, our non-integrated and partially integrated operations could be adversely affected if they are unable to raise paper prices by amounts sufficient to maintain margins.

If we are unable to obtain energy or raw materials at reasonable prices, or at all, it could adversely affect our operations.

We require substantial amounts of oil-based chemicals, fuels and other raw materials for our production activities and transport of our timber products. We rely partly upon third parties for our supply of the energy resources and, to a certain extent, timber, which are consumed in our operations. The prices for and availability of these energy supplies and raw materials may be subject to change or curtailment, respectively, due to, among other things, new laws or regulations, imposition of new taxes or tariffs, interruptions in production by suppliers, worldwide price levels and market conditions.

Environmental litigation aimed at protecting forests and species habitats as well as regulatory restrictions may in the future cause significant reductions in the amount of timber available for commercial harvest. In addition, future claims and regulations concerning the promotion of forest health and the response to and prevention of wildfires could affect timber supplies in the jurisdictions in which we operate. The availability of harvested timber may further be limited by factors such as fire, insect infestation, disease, ice and wind storms, droughts, floods and other nature and man-made causes, thereby reducing supply and increasing prices.

The prices of various sources of energy supplies and raw materials may increase significantly from current levels. An increase in energy and raw material prices could materially adversely affect our results of operations, plantation valuation and financial condition.

A limited number of customers account for a significant amount of our revenues.

We sell a significant portion of our products to several major customers, including PaperlinX, Igepa, xpedx and Antalis. During fiscal 2009 and fiscal 2010, no single customer individually represented more than 10% of our total sales. Any adverse development affecting our principal customers or our relationships with our principal customers could have an adverse effect on our business and results of operations.

For further information see "Item 4 Sappi Fine Paper Marketing and Distribution Customers" and "Item 4 Sappi Southern Africa Marketing and Distribution Customers".

Because of the nature of our business and workforce, we may face challenges in the retention of staff and the employment of skilled people that could adversely affect our business.

We are facing an aging demographic work profile among our staff due to the mature nature of our industry and the rural and often remote location of our mills, together with generally long tenure of employees at the mills. As a result, we are likely to experience groups of employees leaving the company within a relatively short space of time of one another and may have difficulty attracting qualified replacements. The potential risks we face are a loss of institutional memory, skills, experience and management capabilities. We may be unable to attract and retain sufficient qualified replacements when and where necessary to avoid an adverse impact on our business.

Continued volatility in equity markets and declining yields in the bond markets could adversely affect the funded status and funding needs of our post employment benefit funds.

The general outlook for the forthcoming fiscal years is that bond and equity markets, including the sovereign debt markets, will continue to move in very uncertain and unusual ways, which in turn could result in significant swings in yields on corporate bonds and government bonds and continued volatility within the equity markets. Whilst equity and bond markets recently recovered, we expect depressed bond yields will remain and therefore maintain upward pressure on our employment benefit fund liabilities. The unusual government interventions in economies are likely to provide continued uncertainty in markets making it very difficult for us to predict which key factors, and how the interaction of these key factors, will change the post employment benefit funds' balance sheet funding status. As a result of movements in the global equity and bond markets, the funded status of our post employment benefit arrangements did not recover during fiscal 2010.

The reduction in certain statutory minimum funding requirements provided relief in the amount and timing of contributions to our employment benefit funds. Most funding requirements consider yields on assets such as government bonds or interbank interest rate swap curves, depending on the basis. If these yields remain at the low levels experienced in fiscal 2010 and governments vary their terms of minimum funding targets, we might need to pay additional contributions to our employment benefit funds.

Catastrophic events affecting our plantations, such as fires, may adversely impact our ability to supply our southern African mills with timber from the region.

The southern African landscape is prone to, and ecologically adapted to, frequent fires. The risk of uncontrolled fires entering and burning significant areas of plantation is high, but under normal weather conditions this risk is managed through comprehensive fire prevention and protection plans. In 2007 and 2008, southern Africa experienced a number of abnormal weather events (hot, dry conditions fanned by extremely strong winds), which resulted in disastrous plantation fires across vast areas of eastern South Africa and Swaziland affecting 14,000 hectares and 26,000 hectares, respectively, of our plantations. There is some cause for concern that these abnormal weather conditions may be occurring more frequently as a result of the impact of climate change. In addition, because the transformation of land ownership and management in southern Africa has been moving ownership and management of plantations to independent growers, we have less ability to directly manage fire risk, as well as risks of other catastrophic events, such as pathogen and pest infestations. As a consequence, the risk of plantation fires or other catastrophic events remains high and may be increasing. Continued or increased losses of our wood source could jeopardize our ability to supply our mills with timber from the region.

A large percentage of our employees are unionized and wage increases or work stoppages by our unionized employees may have a material adverse effect on our business.

A large percentage of our employees are represented by labor unions under collective bargaining agreements, which need to be renewed from time to time. In addition, we have in the past and may in the future seek, or be obligated to seek, agreements with our employees regarding workforce reductions, closures and other restructurings. We may not be able to negotiate acceptable new collective bargaining agreements or future restructuring agreements, which could result in labor disputes. Also, we may become subject to material cost increases or additional work rules imposed by agreements with labor unions. This could increase expenses in absolute terms and/or as a percentage of net sales. Although we believe we have good relations with our employees, work stoppages or other labor disturbances may occur in the future which could adversely impact our business.

Concerns about the effects of climate change may have an impact on our business.

Concerns about global warming and carbon footprints, as well as legal and financial incentives favoring alternative fuels, are causing the increased use of sustainable, non-fossil fuel sources for electricity generation.

The increased emphasis on water footprint in southern Africa is causing increased focus on the use of water by our operational units, on the quality of water released back into the water systems and on the control of effluent. The costs of water used also have a direct bearing on our input costs and operating profit.

Climate change could also cause the spread of disease and pestilence into our plantations and fiber sources, far beyond their traditional geographic spreads, increasing the risk that wood supply necessary to our operations may be negatively impacted.

Our ability to utilize our net operating tax loss carry forwards generated by our United States operations could be substantially limited if we experience a Company ownership change as defined under the United States Internal Revenue Code, which may adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition.

As a result of Sappi Fine Paper North America's past financial performance, we have net operating tax loss carry forwards generated by our United States operations. Section 382 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), contains rules that limit the ability of a company that undergoes an ownership change, at the Sappi Limited company level, to utilize its net operating tax loss carry forwards in years after the ownership change. An "ownership change" for purposes of Section 382 of the Code generally refers to any change in ownership of more than 50% of the company's shares over a three-year period. These rules generally operate by focusing on ownership changes among shareholders owning, directly or indirectly, 5% or more of the share capital of a company or any change in ownership arising from a new issuance of the company's shares.

If we undergo an ownership change for purposes of Section 382 as a result of future transactions involving our share capital, including purchases or sales of shares between our greater than 5% shareholders, our ability to use our net operating tax loss carry forwards generated by our United States operations would be subject to the limitations of Section 382. Depending on the resulting limitations, a portion of our United States net operating tax loss carry forwards could expire before we would be able to use them. Our inability to utilize our United States net operating tax loss carry forwards could have an adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

Risks Related to Our Shares

Your ability to sell a substantial number of ordinary shares may be restricted by the limited liquidity of shares traded on the JSE Limited.

The principal trading market for our ordinary shares is on the exchange operated by the JSE Limited ("JSE") (formerly known as the Johannesburg Stock Exchange). Historically, trading volumes and liquidity of shares listed on the JSE have been low in comparison with other major international markets. In fiscal 2010, 467 million of our ordinary shares were traded on the JSE and 11 million ADSs were traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The relatively low liquidity of shares traded on JSE Limited could affect your ability to sell ordinary shares. See "Item 7 Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions Major Shareholders", "Item 9 The Offer and Listing Offer and Listing Details" and "Item 9 The Offer and Listing Markets".

Significant shareholders may be able to influence the affairs of our Company.

Although our investigation of beneficial ownership of our shares identified only one beneficial owner of more than 5% of our ordinary shares, holding approximately 11.9%, as shown in our shareholders' register on October 1, 2010, the four largest shareholders of record, all of which are nominees that hold shares for a multitude of beneficial owners, owned approximately 90.1% of our ordinary shares as of September 23, 2010. These significant potential voting blocks of nominee registered shareholders may have the power to influence voting decisions for the shares they hold. See "Item 7 Major Shareholders and Related Party Transactions Major Shareholders".

Risks Related to Our Indebtedness

To service our other indebtedness, we will require a significant amount of cash, and our ability to generate cash will depend on many factors beyond our control.

Our ability to make payments on our indebtedness, and to refinance our indebtedness, and to fund planned capital expenditures and working capital requirements will partly depend on our ability to generate cash in the future. This ability is, to a certain extent, subject to general economic, financial, competitive, legislative, regulatory and other factors that are beyond our control. See "Risks Related to Our Industry" and "Risks Related to Our Business".

We cannot assure you that we will generate sufficient cash flow from operations, that we will realize operating improvements on schedule or that future borrowings will be available to us in an amount sufficient to enable us to service and repay our indebtedness or to fund our other liquidity needs. If we are unable to satisfy our debt obligations, we may have to undertake alternative financing plans, such as refinancing or restructuring our indebtedness, selling assets, reducing or delaying capital investments or seeking to raise additional capital. We cannot assure you that any refinancing or debt restructuring would be possible, that any assets could be sold or that, if sold, the timing of the sales and the amount of proceeds realized from those sales, or that additional financing could be obtained on acceptable terms.

Some of our credit facilities contain covenants that restrict some of our corporate activities, including our ability to:

make acquisitions or investments;

make loans or otherwise extend credit to others;

incur indebtedness or issue guarantees;

create security;

sell, lease, transfer or dispose of assets;

merge or consolidate with other companies; and

make substantial changes to the general nature of our business.

In addition, certain of our credit facilities require us to comply with certain covenants and specified financial covenants and ratios. Our ability to comply with these covenants and restrictions may be affected by events beyond our control. These include prevailing economic, financial and industry conditions. If we breach any of these covenants or restrictions, we could be in default under the credit facilities and other indebtedness. This would permit the lending banks under our credit facilities to take certain actions, including declaring all amounts that we have borrowed to be due and payable, together with accrued and unpaid interest. The lending banks could also refuse to extend further credit under their facilities. If we are unable to repay our debt to the lending banks, they could proceed against any collateral that secures the debt under the credit facilities. If we are unable to make payments on time or refinance our indebtedness, or if our debt or any other material financing arrangement that we enter into is accelerated, this could have a material adverse effect on our business and financial condition.

ITEM 4. INFORMATION ON THE COMPANY

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY

Sappi Limited is a public company incorporated in the Republic of South Africa. Our principal executive offices are located at 48 Ameshoff Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2001, Republic of South Africa, our telephone number is +27-11-407-8111 and our web address is www.sappi.com. We currently have our primary listing on the JSE Limited ("JSE"), formerly the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and have a secondary listing on the New York Stock Exchange.

Sappi Limited was founded and incorporated in 1936 in South Africa and is a corporation organized under the Companies Act 61 of 1973 of the Republic of South Africa.

Until 1990, we primarily expanded our operations within southern Africa. Since 1990, we have grown through acquisitions outside of southern Africa. In the mid 1990's we acquired S.D. Warren Company, a market leader in the United States in coated woodfree paper and a major producer of other speciality paper products. It now conducts business as Sappi Fine Paper North America. In the late 1990's we acquired KNP Leykam, a leading European producer of coated woodfree paper. KNP Leykam now conducts business as Sappi Fine Paper Europe. In 2002 we acquired Potlatch Corporation's coated woodfree paper business and have integrated it in Sappi Fine Paper North America.

In 2004 we acquired 34% of Jiangxi Chenming Paper Company Limited, a company incorporated in the People's Republic of China. The joint venture commissioned a coated mechanical paper machine with a capacity of 350,000 tonnes per annum, a mechanical pulp mill with a capacity of 187,000 tonnes per annum and a de-inked pulp mill with a capacity of 136,000 tonnes per annum during 2005.

In August 2006, we announced the expansion of the existing capacity at Sappi Saiccor in South Africa, where chemical cellulose products are produced. The capacity of the mill was increased from approximately 600,000 metric tonnes per annum to 800,000 metric tonnes per annum.

During 2008, we closed our Blackburn mill in the United Kingdom and ceased production from PM 5 at our Maastricht mill in The Netherlands. Profitable products produced at these mills were moved to our other facilities in Europe.

On December 31, 2008, we acquired the coated graphic paper business of M-real Corporation, including brands, know-how, intellectual property, order books, and four mills. We also entered into agreements to purchase pulp, wood and energy from M-real Corporation and its associates and to sell the coated paper output of two mills owned and operated by the M-real Corporation.

During August 2009 we permanently ceased operations at Muskegon mill in the United States. Customers are being served from our other North American operations.

On November 2, 2009 we delisted from the London Stock Exchange (LSE). The London share register was closed on November 23, 2009 with all remaining shareholders on the United Kingdom share register being transferred to the South African share register.

On January 31, 2010 we closed our production facilities at the Usutu mill in Swaziland due to market conditions and forest fire damage. However, the re-habilitation of the forestry operations at Usutu will continue. With this closure, we have exited the unbleached kraft pulp market.

During January 2010 we permanently ceased operations at the Kangas mill in Finland. Products produced at the Kangas mill were moved to and supplied from the Lanaken mill in Belgium and our Kirkniemi mill in Finland.

On March 24, 2010, we announced a BEE transaction involving the issuance of 24.3 million Sappi shares (approximately 4.5% of Sappi Limited). The transaction empowers our South African employees, our strategic empowerment partner, Lereko Investments, and the South African communities in which

we operate. The transaction was approved by our shareholders on April 29, 2010. We recorded a charge of US\$ 23.4 million to the income statement in respect of this transaction.

On April 19, 2010, we announced the acquisition of 14,500ha of forestry land in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The plantation will supply an additional 150,000 tons of fiber to our Ngodwana mill.