The SOL GROUP: the Board of Directors has examined the 6-monthly report of 30 June 2000.

A consolidated turnover of Itl 201.5 bn, up 9.8% (Itl 183.5 bn in the first two quarters of 1999) and gross operating margin of Itl 49.5 bn (compared to Itl 45.1 bn in the same period in 1999).

Pre-tax consolidated profits of Itl 22.4 bn, up 21.7% on Itl 18.4 bn in the first half of 1999.

A positive forecast for 2000.

A consolidated turnover of Itl 201.5 bn, up 9.3% on the first half of 1999 (Itl 183.5 bn as at 30.06.1999), a gross operating margin of Itl 49.5 bn (up 10% on Itl 45.1 bn in the first two quarters of 1999), gross operating cash flow of Itl 45.5 bn (Itl 40 bn as at 30.06.1999) and pre-tax consolidated profits of Itl 22.4 bn, up 21.7% on Itl 18.4 bn for the first half of 1999.

These are the chief results specified in the interim report of 30.06.2000, examined by the Board of Directors of SOL S.p.A. a listed company on the Italian Stock Exchange and holding company of a multinational group active in the sector of medical and technical gases and home healthcare.

Specifically, the consolidated turnover of Itl 201.5 bn in the first six months of 2000, is up 9.8% on the result of the same period in 1999 (Itl 183.5 bn), due to the good results turned in both by healthcare and by technical gases.

The group's home healthcare sector, Vivisol, reported a sharp increase in turnover of 20.6%, due mainly to overseas business and the sales of Ability Team Gmbh, a German healthcare provider, in which the group acquired a majority shareholding.

In the technical gas sector, the Group returned excellent sales figures with the Feluy plant in Belgium, in production for European markets, and the positive trend in sales from the on-site gas pipeline.

In the first half of 2000, the Group continued its strategic expansion in foreign markets and in Italy, purchasing HGT S.A., a Greek company based in Thessaloniki, owners of filling plant and distributors of technical and medicinal gases in northern Greece; the Group also started up new production facilities in Wiener Neustadt, near Vienna, for the development of the Austrian market.

The necessary licenses were obtained for the construction and operation of the fractionation plant in Mantova; work is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2001, and the plant is due to come on-stream by the end of 2002.

In financial terms, gross operating cash flow in the first half of 2000 was Itl 45.5 bn (up 13.5% on the Itl 40 bn in the equivalent period of 1999), net debt shrank to Itl 51.7 bn (compared to Itl 59.8 bn as at 30.06.99) and Itl 25.6 bn worth of investments were made for Group development.

Relevant events after 30.06.2000 include the agreement to purchase 100% of France Oxygen Sarl, a business providing home healthcare services in northern France.

The forecast for 2000 is positive both in terms of turnover and profitability.

"The mid-year results are positive," commented SOL Chairman Aldo Fumagalli Romario, "with substantial increases in turnover and gross profitability, consolidating our presence in Europe."

"We believe that the SOL Group will finish the year with higher net sales than last year and with increased profits."

Milan, 11 September 2000