

European M&As and FTSE Forecast to Rise

74% of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) professionals expect M&A activity in Europe to increase in the second half of this year, according to recent research from Willis Group Holdings (NYSE:WSH), the global insurance broker.

In addition, 61% of industry professionals expect the FTSE Index to climb to over 4000 by the end of 2003, indicating that a general rise in M&A activity will take place as the trading environment becomes more favorable. Those surveyed also unanimously said they believe insurance has a vital role to play in the completion of M&A transactions.

This research, in which 200 M&A professionals were surveyed, was carried out at a major seminar last Wednesday, hosted by Willis.

The seminar, entitled "The M&A Environment and the Value of Insurance in Transactions", reviewed contemporary M&A issues including the future of M&A in Europe and whether the insurance market can continue to add value in transactions.

The event attracted a wide range of professional delegates, including representatives from private equity firms, banks, law firms, accountants, corporate finance advisers and corporate investors.

The high-level panel of speakers included Joe Plumeri (Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Willis), Scott Nuttall (Associate, KKR), Will Schmidt (Managing Director, Advent International), Chris Townsend (Head of European Mergers & Acquisitions, AIG) and David Lewis (Partner, Clifford Chance).

In addition to the survey results, other major issues discussed included the role of private equity in M&A, recent trends in the structure of transactions and developments in the style and ambit of seller warranties.

Willis is one of the leading brokers for M&A solutions and has recently consolidated its Mergers & Acquisitions Practice to best cater for its clients' needs.

Nathan Sewell, head of Willis' Mergers & Acquisitions Practice, commented: "It was great to see so many of those involved in doing deals on a daily basis attend this event and exciting to hear that the majority have an upbeat view on M&A activity throughout the remainder of 2003."

"M&A insurance professionals are increasingly considered to be essential members of the deal team. Whether the buyer requires advice and assistance in assessing the target's ongoing insurance needs, or whether a seller needs assistance in making a "clean exit" from their investment, the insurance industry can make all the difference," he added.

Willis Group Holdings Limited is a leading global insurance broker, developing and delivering professional insurance, reinsurance, risk management, financial and human resource consulting and actuarial services to corporations, public entities and institutions around the world. With over 300 offices in more than 80 countries, its global team of 13,000 associates serves clients in 180 countries. Willis is publicly

traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol WSH. Additional information on Willis may be found on its web site: www.willis.com.