SABMiller plc Trading Update

SABMiller plc (SABMiller) today issues its Interim Management Statement for the group's first quarter ended 30 June 2011. The calculation of the organic growth rates below excludes the effects of acquisitions and disposals.

On an organic basis, both lager and soft drinks volumes for the first quarter grew 5%. Volume growth reflects the strength of our brand portfolio and commercial execution, growth in consumer spending in many developing markets, and a relatively weak comparative quarter in the prior year. Increased volumes, combined with selective price increases and some mix benefits, grew group revenue 7% on an organic, constant currency basis for the quarter, with group revenue per hectolitre up 2% on the same basis. We continued to increase investment behind our brands and as expected, raw material costs rose moderately. The group's financial performance in the quarter was in line with our expectations.

In Latin America, lager volumes grew by 6% on an organic basis. Colombia's lager volumes increased 6% partially reflecting lower sales in the prior year following the increase in VAT in February 2010, as well as improved marketing effectiveness and in-trade execution. These factors, together with fewer election “dry days” and the normalisation of weather patterns in June, more than offset the adverse impact on volumes of flooding and infrastructural damage. Lager volumes in Peru were 11% higher, driven by our brand portfolio and sales service initiatives to expand the beer category and capture share from the informal alcohol sector, and benefited from the buoyant economy. Ecuador lager volumes fell 1% due to government restrictions on alcohol sales on Sundays introduced in June 2010, and three “dry days” for a referendum over a peak consumption weekend. Soft drinks volumes across the region were up 10%, with good performances in Honduras and El Salvador, supported by expansion into new soft drinks categories.

In Europe, lager volumes were up 5%. Poland's volumes were up 4% cycling a weak comparative quarter that was impacted by widespread flooding and alcohol sales restrictions during a nine day national mourning period following the death of the president. The market continued to be impacted by significant competitor discounting. In the Czech Republic, domestic volumes grew by 4% supported by brand and package innovations despite continued market pressures. Russia's volumes were up 11%, with improved market performance compared to a weak quarter in the prior year, following the significant excise increase in January 2010. Our volumes in Romania declined by 3% as the market continued to suffer the effects of a fragile economic environment and government austerity measures. The region's volume performance benefited from significantly higher volumes in Ukraine, while volumes in the United Kingdom continued to grow. Volumes in Italy and the Netherlands were marginally lower.

In the three months to 30 June 2011, MillerCoors' US domestic sales to retailers (STRs) were down 2.7%, as a result of a continued weak economic environment, ongoing high unemployment levels and subdued consumer spending affected by high fuel prices and poor weather. Premium light STRs were down low single digits, as Miller Lite declined mid single digits and Coors Light volumes grew slightly. The Tenth and Blake craft and imports division maintained its strong performance with double digit growth, led by Blue Moon, including its seasonal brand extensions, and Leinenkugel's. Peroni Nastro Azzurro also delivered good growth in the quarter. The below premium segment saw a mid single digit volume decline as industry uptrading continued. Domestic sales to wholesalers (STWs) were down 3.1% in the quarter.

Lager volumes in Africa grew by 15% on an organic basis boosted by enhanced distribution, the strength of our local brand portfolios and generally favourable economic conditions. Lager volumes in Tanzania grew 23% against a prior year comparative period in which volumes declined. In Uganda, lager volumes were up 28% driven by strong in-trade execution. In Zambia, strong economic conditions, coupled with our focus on availability and outlet price execution, helped grow lager volumes by 29%. Lager volumes in Mozambique grew by 12% following a successful renovation of the mainstream brand 2M and enhanced market penetration in the north of the country. Angola's lager volumes grew 19% aided by the commissioning of the new brewery in Luanda in the prior year and increased availability in the north. Zimbabwe's lager volumes grew 28% on an organic basis following capacity upgrades in the prior year. Our associate Castel delivered lager volume...
growth of 9%. Soft drinks volumes grew by 9% on an organic basis with solid performances in Ghana and Zimbabwe, and from our associate Castel.

Lager volumes in Asia grew 11% on an organic basis, led by a 14% increase in China's volumes. Further share gains and improved weather conditions, compared to the severe storms that affected the prior year, underpinned China's growth with strong performances in the west and central regions. In India, volumes for the quarter were 13% below the prior year as we continued to be impacted by trading restrictions introduced in July 2010 in Andhra Pradesh. Excise increases implemented at the start of the quarter also limited overall market growth in a number of key states.

In South Africa, lager volumes ended the first quarter level with the prior year. Although volumes benefited from an Easter peak trading period, this was partially offset by the positive impact of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in the prior year. Our core power brand portfolio continued to benefit from targeted investment and enhanced retail execution, with Castle Lite in particular growing strongly. Soft drinks volumes declined by 3% during the quarter although retail execution continued to show improvement. Both beer and soft drinks volumes were affected by the cycling of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, unseasonably cold and wet weather and subdued consumer demand.

In May 2011 SpA Birra Peroni agreed to sell its in-house distribution business to the Tuo Group and the transaction was completed on 13 June 2011.

Also in May 2011, SABMiller Africa BV agreed to sell its 20% shareholding in its associate, Kenya Breweries Limited (KBL), to East African Breweries Limited (EABL) for a cash consideration of approximately US$225 million, subject to EABL disposing of its 20% shareholding in Tanzania Breweries Limited by way of a public offer through the Dar-es-Salaam Stock Exchange. SABMiller International BV also agreed to terminate a brewing and distribution agreement with KBL.

On 21 June 2011, the group announced that it had made a non-binding, conditional proposal to the Board of Directors of Foster's Group Limited to acquire all of Foster's shares for A$4.90 per fully paid share in cash to be financed through existing resources and new debt facilities. The group also confirmed that it had separately reached agreement to acquire Coca-Cola Amatil Limited's share of the Pacific Beverages Pty Limited joint venture should SABMiller acquire a controlling interest in Foster's.

On 1 July 2011, the group announced that it had entered into a distribution agreement with the Van Steenberge brewery in Ertvelde, Belgium, to distribute SABMiller's first Belgium beer in select markets.

In April 2011, the group entered into a five-year US$2,500 million committed syndicated facility, with the option of two one-year extensions. This facility replaced the existing US$2,000 million and US$600 million committed syndicated facilities, which were both voluntarily cancelled.

On 1 July 2011 a US$600m bond, issued in 2006, matured and was repaid from cash resources.

Lesley Knox and Helen Weir joined the SABMiller board as independent non-executive directors on 19 May 2011. Both new directors were appointed to the audit committee, and Lesley Knox also joined the remuneration committee.

Tom Long was appointed as the new chief executive officer of MillerCoors, with effect from 1 June 2011, replacing Leo Kiely who had successfully guided the integration and start-up of MillerCoors.

On 1 July 2011, Domenic De Lorenzio, the group's Director of Corporate Finance and Development, joined the SABMiller group executive committee.

After 25 years of service, Malcolm Wyman, Chief Financial Officer, will retire at the end of August 2011, and stands down from the board effective 21 July 2011. Malcolm will be replaced by Jamie Wilson, previously the Finance Director for SABMiller Europe.

ENDS

Notes to editors
SABMiller plc is one of the world's largest brewers with brewing interests and distribution agreements across six continents. The group's wide portfolio includes global brands Pilsner Urquell, Peroni Nastro Azzurro, Miller Genuine Draft and Grolsch, as well as leading local brands such as Aguila, Castle, Miller Lite, Snow and Tyskie. SABMiller is also one of the world's largest bottlers of Coca-Cola products.

In the year ended 31 March 2011, the group reported US$4,491 million adjusted pre-tax profit and group revenue of US$28,311 million. SABMiller plc is listed on the London and Johannesburg stock exchanges.

Supporting media materials
High resolution images and broadcast footage are available for the media to view and download free of charge from the News and media centre on www.sabmiller.com
This announcement does not constitute an offer to sell or issue or the solicitation of an offer to buy or acquire securities of SABMiller plc (the “Company”) or any of its affiliates in any jurisdiction or an inducement to enter into investment activity.

This announcement includes “forward-looking statements”. These statements may contain the words “anticipate”, “believe”, “intend”, “estimate”, “expect” and words of similar meaning. All statements other than statements of historical facts included in this announcement, including, without limitation, those regarding the Company’s financial position, business strategy, plans and objectives of management for future operations (including development plans and objectives relating to the Company’s products and services), are forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other important factors that could cause the actual results, performance or achievements of the Company to be materially different from future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are based on numerous assumptions regarding the Company’s present and future business strategies and the environment in which the Company will operate in the future. These forward-looking statements speak only as at the date of this announcement. The Company expressly disclaims any obligation or undertaking to disseminate any updates or revisions to any forward-looking statements contained in this announcement to reflect any change in the Company’s expectations with regard thereto or any change in events, conditions or circumstances on which any such statement is based. Any information contained in this announcement on the price at which the Company’s securities have been bought or sold in the past, or on the yield on such securities, should not be relied upon as a guide to future performance.

This information is provided by RNS
The company news service from the London Stock Exchange