

Corporate Governance Report

8 Auditors

8.1 Generalities

The main duties of the auditors are to report to the General Meeting the results of their audits, the objective of which is to verify that the annual financial statements, the Annual Report and the proposed appropriation of retained earnings comply with the law and the Aol.

The auditors recommend the approval, with or without qualification, or the rejection of the annual financial statements. Further, when the Company is required to deliver consolidated financial statements, the auditors must report on the compliance with the law and the accounting principles adopted for the consolidation. The auditors must be present at Ordinary General Meetings, unless a unanimous resolution of the shareholders provides otherwise.

The consolidated financial statements and the statutory financial statements of the Company have been audited since 1999 by PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd, which has been re-elected each year since then.

The auditors must be independent from the Board, the Executive Management and the shareholders. Except for tax matters, audit-related services and other services that can

generally only be provided by the auditors (e.g. reviews of documents filed with FINMA), the Group uses consultants who are independent from the auditors.

In addition to their audit opinions, the auditors are requested to provide the Audit & Risk Committee with specific information such as their audit findings, comments on accounting issues and audit fee proposals.

8.2 Duration of the mandate and term of office of the lead auditor

The auditors are elected for a one-year term by the General Meeting and are eligible for re-election. They were re-elected on 10 May 2019. Since 2014, Beresford Caloia has been responsible for the audit of the Group. The rotation frequency of the lead auditor is maximum seven years.

8.3 Audit fees and additional fees

The total fees charged by the auditors to the Group in 2019 are analysed as follows:

	2019	2018
in CHF		
Audit fees	920,767	716,682
Additional fees:		
Tax	55,000	60,000
Total	975,767	776,682

Audit fees are agreed upon in advance for the audits of the consolidated and statutory financial statements of the Group companies, as well as for the regulatory audit of Swissquote Bank Ltd. They can be adjusted in the course of the relevant year under special circumstances.

In 2019, audit fees increased due to the growth of the Group's operations in Luxembourg mainly, as well as in Singapore.

Tax-related additional fees mainly cover the assistance provided to the Group when filing local tax returns.

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8.4 Informational instruments pertaining to the auditors

The auditors closely interact with the Audit & Risk Committee and are invited to its meetings. In 2019, the auditors met five times with the Audit & Risk Committee.

Year-round, the auditors issue, inter alia, the following documents:

- Planning report with respect to the audit of the statutory and consolidated financial statements of the Company, respectively of the statutory financial statements of Swissquote Bank Ltd. The document includes information on (i) the developments in accounting standards, (ii) the auditors' risk analysis, (iii) the audit of the internal control system in connection with the preparation of the financial statements, (iv) the coordination of the auditors' activities with the internal auditor, (v) the estimated fees and (vi) the timeline of the audit;
- Planning report with respect to the regulatory audit, which includes information on (i) the changes in the regulatory environment, (ii) the auditors' risk analysis and the audit strategy pursuant to FINMA Circular 2013/3 on auditing, (iii) the estimated fees and (iv) the timeline of the audit activities;
- Review report with respect to the condensed consolidated interim financial statements;
- Comprehensive report to the Audit & Risk Committee and to the Board with respect to the statutory and consolidated financial statements of the Company, respectively to the Board of Directors of Swissquote Bank Ltd with respect to the statutory financial statements of Swissquote Bank Ltd. The document includes the auditors' key findings regarding the accounting, the internal control system and the performance and results of the audit;
- Regulatory audit report to FINMA, a copy of which is addressed to the Board of Directors;
- Report to the General Meeting of the Company, respectively of Swissquote Bank Ltd, on the results of the audit of the financial statements. The document includes (i) the auditors' opinion as to whether the financial statements should be approved with or without qualification, or rejected, (ii) information on the independence of the auditors, (iii) a confirmation as to whether an internal control system exists or not

and (iv) a confirmation as to whether the proposed appropriation of retained earnings complies with the law and the Aol; and

- Report to the General Meeting of the Company on the Remuneration Report.

The above-mentioned documents are commented on by the auditors during meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee. In particular, the planning of the statutory and consolidated financial audits and the planning of the regulatory audit are discussed at the Annual Conference on Risks, to which the members of the Audit & Risk Committee attend.

The Audit & Risk Committee also receives copies of the reports related to Swissquote Bank Ltd's compliance with the provisions of agreements or private regulations (e.g. regulations issued by the SIX Swiss Exchange). This allows the Audit & Risk Committee to assess the work of the auditors performed outside the standard audit services, in particular in terms of conflicts of interest.

Once a year, the Audit & Risk Committee reviews the qualification, independence and performance of the auditors and assesses, inter alia, the level of expertise available, the adequacy of resources and the quality of the planning (in particular the coordination with the internal auditor). The Audit & Risk Committee assesses the auditors' independence on the basis of the auditors' related annual confirmation and on the Audit & Risk Committee's own assessment of the various reports addressed to its attention or of which it received a copy. The Audit & Risk Committee also assesses whether the amount and trend in audit fees appears reasonable. In this respect, changes to audit fees must be justified by the auditors, taking into consideration changes in volumes to be audited and/or the complexity of the audits. Based on its annual assessment, the Audit & Risk Committee recommends to the Board to either propose the General Meeting to re-elect the auditors or to start a process for the selection of new auditors.