

## CREDIT OPINION

26 June 2018

Update

✓ Rate this Research

### RATINGS

#### Essity Aktiebolag

Domicile	Sweden
Long Term Rating	Baa1
Type	LT Issuer Rating - Fgn Curr
Outlook	Stable

Please see the [ratings section](#) at the end of this report for more information. The ratings and outlook shown reflect information as of the publication date.

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## Essity Aktiebolag

Update following the stabilisation of the outlook

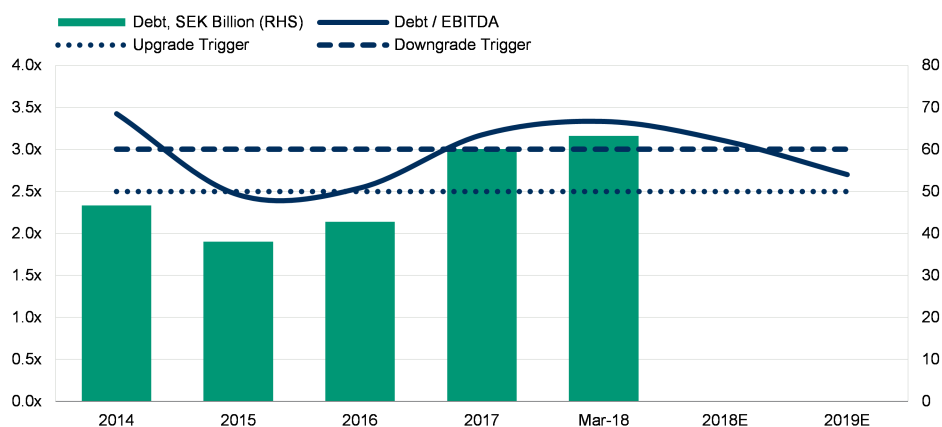
### Summary

The Baa1/P-2 ratings of [Essity Aktiebolag](#) (Essity) primarily reflect (1) the company's sizeable scale, with revenues of SEK109 billion in 2017 (around \$13 billion), and a broad product portfolio; (2) its leading market positions, with well-recognised brands and a good track record of innovation; (3) its global footprint, with faster-growing emerging markets representing roughly one-third of its revenue; (4) its fairly good underlying growth and stability in demand for its products; and (5) its financial policies aimed at protecting its solid investment-grade rating and a track record of material positive free cash flow generation that the company can use for deleveraging if needed.

Essity's ratings are primarily constrained by (1) the company's exposure to volatile input costs, pulp in particular, which can be passed through only with a material delay; (2) the somewhat below-average profitability compared with that of most of its similarly rated peers, such as [Kimberly-Clark](#) (K-C, A2 stable) or [Procter & Gamble](#) (P&G, Aa3 stable), with a Moody's-adjusted EBIT margin of around 11% in 2017; (3) some debt-funded M&A risk, which however falls within the company's commitment to maintaining a solid investment-grade rating; and (4) a still fairly high leverage, following the debt-funded acquisition of BSN Medical in April 2017, which positions Essity weakly in the Baa1 category.

Exhibit 1

We expect Essity to continue deleveraging following the acquisition of BSN Medical



All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

Forward view represents Moody's view and does not incorporate any material divestments and acquisitions (other than the acquisition of BSN Medical).

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics

## Credit strengths

- » A strong business profile, with a broad portfolio of well-positioned global (Tork and Tena) and regional brands
- » Fairly good underlying growth and stability of demand for most of its products
- » Financial policy aimed at protecting its solid investment-grade rating

## Credit challenges

- » Exposure to volatile input costs such as pulp and recycled paper
- » Ongoing need for innovation in the personal care and tissue business areas to preserve pricing levels
- » Event risks, such as debt-funded M&A or shareholder-friendly actions

## Rating outlook

The stable outlook reflects our expectation that Essity will continue deleveraging in the next 12-18 months, bringing its Moody's-adjusted debt/EBITDA to below 3.0x, both through EBITDA growth and debt repayments.

## Factors that could lead to an upgrade

- » EBIT margin consistently above 12% in all the company's business areas
- » Retained cash flow/net debt above 25%
- » Debt/EBITDA well below 2.5x
- » Continued positive free cash flow generation applied towards debt reduction

## Factors that could lead to a downgrade

- » A decline in the company's EBIT margin to below 9%
- » Retained cash flow/net debt falling sustainably below 20%
- » Debt/EBITDA deteriorating towards 3x
- » Free cash flow turning negative
- » Erosion of the company's solid liquidity profile

This publication does not announce a credit rating action. For any credit ratings referenced in this publication, please see the ratings tab on the issuer/entity page on [www.moody's.com](http://www.moody's.com) for the most updated credit rating action information and rating history.

## Key indicators

Exhibit 2

### Key Indicators for Essity

	12/31/2014	12/31/2015	12/31/2016	12/31/2017	3/31/2018(LTM)	next 12-18 months
Total Sales (USD Billion)	\$12.9	\$11.7	\$11.8	\$12.8	\$13.4	\$13 - \$15
EBIT Margin	9.9%	10.2%	10.9%	11.4%	11.0%	10% - 13%
Debt / EBITDA	3.4x	2.5x	2.5x	3.2x	3.3x	2.7x - 3.1x
RCF / Net Debt	24.4%	35.7%	28.0%	25.1%	25.1%	22% - 26%
EBIT / Interest Expense	6.7x	7.8x	8.9x	8.5x	8.3x	9x - 10x

All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

This represents Moody's forward view; not the view of the issuer; and does not incorporate significant acquisitions and divestitures (other than BSN Medical)

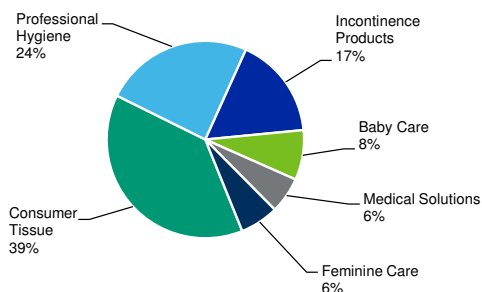
Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™

## Profile

Headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, Essity Aktiebolag (Essity) is one of the leading global hygiene and health companies, with sales of SEK109 in 2017 (around \$13 billion). The company develops, produces and sells a wide range of products, including incontinence products, baby diapers, feminine-care products, consumer tissue, away-from-home tissue, and products for wound care, compression therapy and orthopaedics. With a workforce of roughly 48,000 employees, Essity operates in about 150 countries worldwide under a number of well-recognised brands. Essity was formed in 2016 as a spin-off of the tissue and personal care operations of Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget (SCA). The company is listed on the Stockholm Stock Exchange, with a market capitalisation of around SEK150 billion as of 22 June 2018.

Exhibit 3

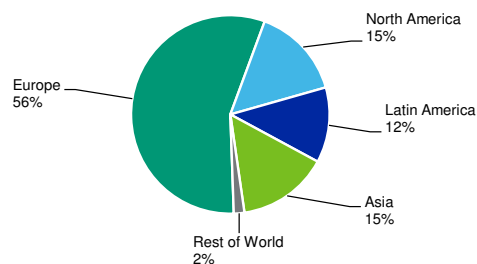
### Revenue split by product As of December 2017



Source: Essity reports

Exhibit 4

### Revenue split by geography As of December 2017



Source: Essity's annual report

## Detailed credit considerations

### Wide portfolio with a number of leading positions globally

Essity's Baa1/P-2 ratings recognise that with sales of over SEK100 billion, the company is one of the leading global hygiene and health companies, active in around 150 countries. Among others, the company is the global leader in incontinence products under the Tena brand and in professional hygiene under the Tork brand. In addition, the company has strong brands and market positions within the markets for baby diapers, feminine care and consumer tissue, as well as regional and global brands and leading market positions in wound care, compression therapy and orthopaedics with brands such as Jobst and Leukoplast. Overall, the company holds the first or second position within at least one product segment in around 90 countries.

Exhibit 5

**Overview of market positions and key brands**

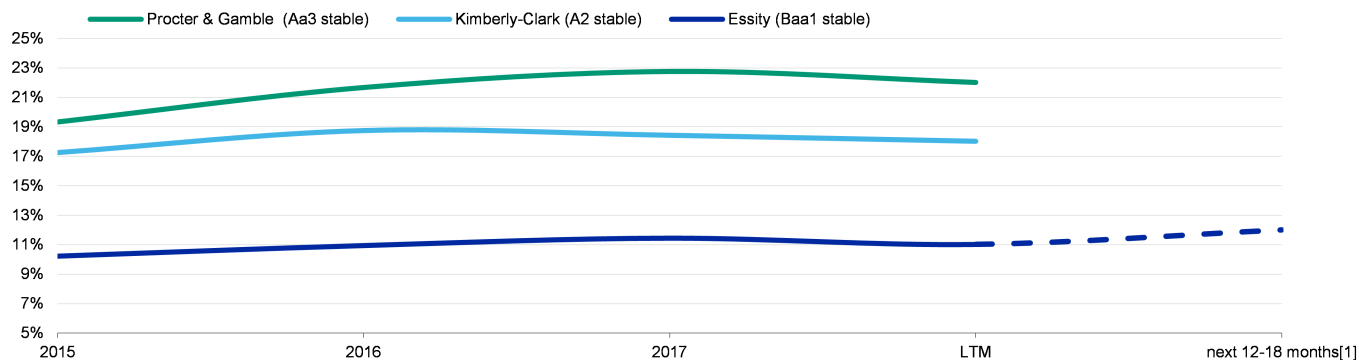
	Global	Europe	North America	Latin America	Asia	Key Brands
Incontinence Products	#1	#1	#4	#1	#4	Tena
Baby Care	#5	#2	n.a.	#6	#6	Drypers, Pequenín, Libero
Feminine Care	#6	#3	n.a.	#1	#10	Libresse, Saba, Nosotras, Bodyform
Medical Solutions	#4	#1	#12	#1	#2	Jobst, Leukoplast, Cutimed, Delta-Cast
Consumer Tissue	#2	#1	n.a.	#3	#1	Edet, Lotus, Regio, Tempo, Vinda, Zewa
Professional Hygiene	#1	#1	#2	#4	#3	Tork

Source: Essity annual reports

The personal care and tissue markets are fairly competitive and subject to periods of temporary oversupply, which require producers to continuously focus on innovation to protect brand strength as well as optimise costs. In the tissue business, which is generally more competitive and less profitable, Essity competes primarily with [Georgia-Pacific](#) (A3, stable), Hengan, Kimberly-Clark (K-C) and Sofidel. In the personal care business, Essity's key competitors are K-C, the Procter & Gamble (P&G) and Unicharm. In April 2017, following the debt-funded acquisition of BSN Medical for a purchase price of €2.7 billion, the company entered the market for medical devices with low technology content, such as wound care and compression therapy, which benefits from robust and stable demand and above-average profitability.

We expect Essity to focus on growing its personal care and medical devices product offerings while further increasing the efficiency of its tissue operations. This strategy will help narrow the profitability gap with the company's more profitable competitors, especially K-C and P&G, which benefit from a higher share of the more profitable personal care business and the generally more profitable US market.

Exhibit 6

**Essity's margins have been below those of its main competitors, but the successful integration of BSN could help somewhat narrow that gap****Moody's-adjusted EBIT margin**

All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

Forward view represents Moody's view, not the view of the issuer.

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics

**Good underlying demand growth, especially in emerging markets**

Essity benefits from the fact that the demand for its products has good underlying growth, supported by megatrends such as population growth and higher disposable income, as well as the increased prevalence of people with chronic diseases. While mature markets continue to experience modest annual growth in low single digits in percentage terms, the growth potential in emerging markets is substantial, and we estimate the annual growth rate in these markets to be in high single digits in percentage terms. This is because the per capita consumption of tissue and personal care products in emerging markets is significantly lower in an environment where living standards are rapidly improving.

To benefit from this development, Essity had focused on growing its presence in emerging markets over the past decade. This was done both organically and through M&A, most recently through an acquisition of a majority stake in Hong-Kong-based tissue company

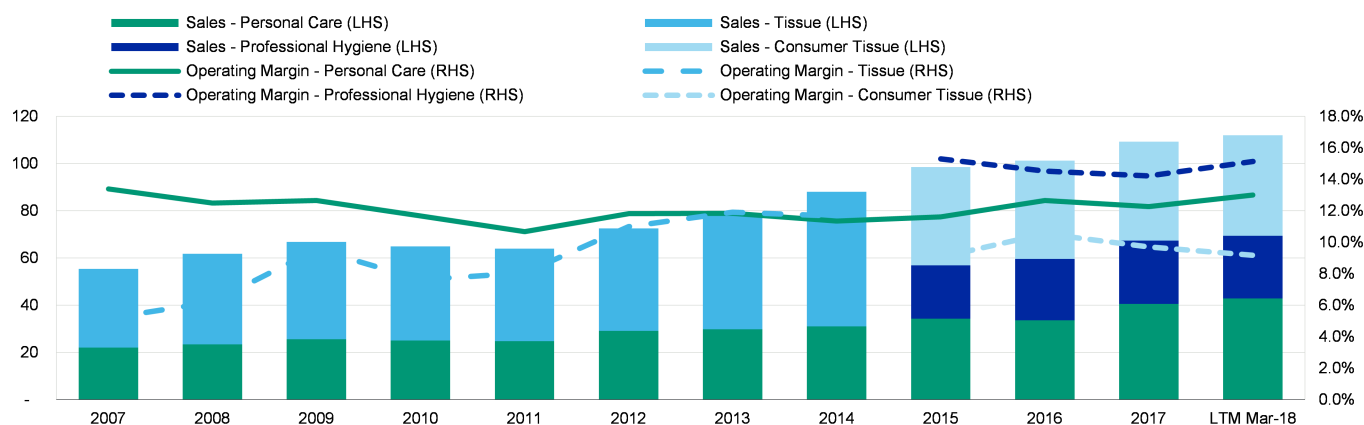
Vinda in November 2013. Currently, emerging markets represent roughly one-third of the revenue, and we expect this share to increase further.

### Stable underlying demand, but exposure to volatile input costs

The demand for Essity products has historically exhibited fairly good stability through the cycle. Even during the 2008-09 global economic downturn, which was unprecedented in its magnitude, the company hardly faced any organic decline in sales, and margins for both the tissue and personal care businesses, the latter one in particular, remained robust. The profitability for both the tissue and personal care operations has been fairly stable over the last decade, which also indicates Essity's ability to manage its key input costs. Some of the input costs, such as pulp (16% of total operating expenses at the group level in 2017) and recycled paper (4%), exhibit fairly high volatility, and price increases can be typically passed to customers only with delays up to one year. Even in an environment of substantially rising pulp prices in 2017 and the first half of 2018, the company delivered a fairly robust performance, with less volatility than that of its key tissue peers in Europe.

Exhibit 7

#### Essity has exhibited fairly stable demand patterns and profitability through the cycle



Change in reporting segments in 2017 with retrospective changes until 2015: The previously named tissue segment is now split into professional hygiene and consumer tissue. Data as reported by the company (that is, without Moody's adjustments).

Sources: Essity reports, former Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget segmental reporting

### M&A risk, but within the limits of Essity's financial policies, targeting a solid investment-grade rating

Essity's financial policies are centered around its commitment to retain a solid investment-grade rating, which drives its capital allocation priorities, including dividend payouts as well as M&A. Although we believe that in the medium term the company will continue to complement organic growth with M&A, especially in the area of medical devices with low technology content where the market is still relatively fragmented, at this point, there is still limited capacity for debt-funded growth. We expect the company to refrain from any major M&A until it improves its credit metrics to the levels commensurate with a Baa1 rating.

Following the acquisition of BSN Medical in April 2017, Essity's leverage continues to be elevated, with Moody's-adjusted debt/EBITDA of 3.3x for the 12 months ended March 2018, which positions the company weakly in the Baa1 category. However, we believe that Essity will be willing and able to deleverage below 3.0x in the next 12 months both through EBITDA growth as the company continues to pass through high pulp prices to its customers and through actual debt repayments. Considering capital spending of 5%-6% of sales and dividends typically of around 50% of net income, we expect the company to continue generating positive free cash flow (FCF) in high single digits in percentage terms of Moody's-adjusted gross debt that could be used for debt repayments. We will consider further smaller acquisitions within the limits of the company's FCF generation on a case-by-case basis.

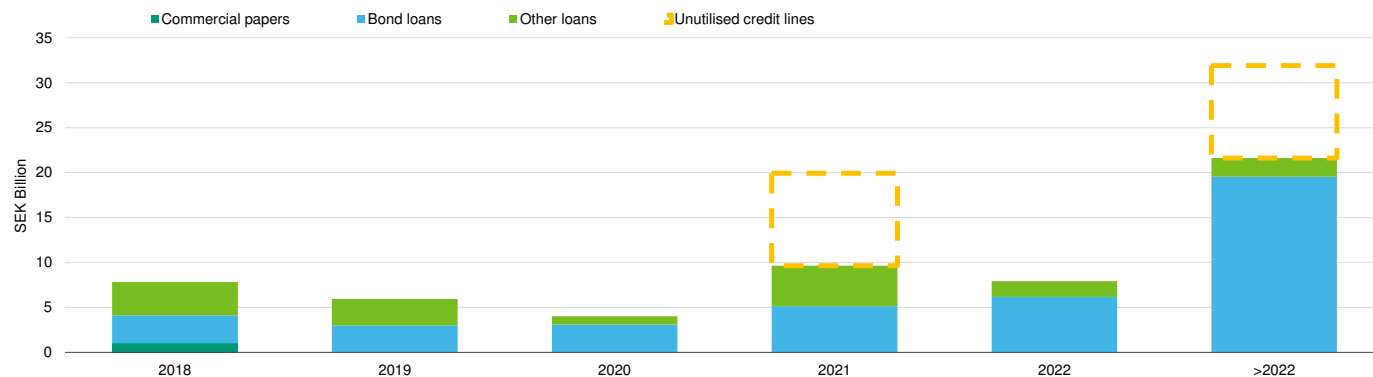
### Liquidity analysis

We consider Essity's liquidity profile to be good, primarily based on our expectation of the company continuing to generate significant positive FCF over the next four to six quarters. As of the end of March 2018, the company reported around SEK5.3 billion of cash and cash equivalents, roughly one-third of which were in countries with currency restrictions. In addition, the company has access to various largely undrawn credit facilities totaling roughly SEK20.5 billion, primarily consisting of two syndicated facilities, each

€1.0 billion, maturing in 2021 and 2023 (the latter one with two extension options of one year each). The facilities are of high quality, without material adverse change clauses and other conditionality language, and have also served as backstop facilities for the commercial paper programme, which has been a central source of the company's short-term funding needs. As of the end of March 2018, the company reported roughly SEK8.3 billion in short-term debt, which includes around SEK1 billion of issued commercial papers and SEK3 billion euro bonds. The company's maturity profile is generally well spread, with an average maturity of around four years.

Exhibit 8

### Essity's debt maturity profile is generally well spread As of 31 March 2018



Source: Essity reports

### Rating methodology and scorecard factors

The principal methodology used in rating Essity is the [Global Packaged Goods](#) rating methodology. The methodology grid indicates a weak A3 rating for the metrics achieved for the 12 months ended March 2018, as well as for our 12-18 month forward-looking view. The one-notch difference is mainly attributed to a weak positioning of Essity in the A category for the Geographic Diversification, Category Assessment and Financial Policy subfactors.

Exhibit 9

## Methodology grid for Essity

Consumer Packaged Goods Industry Grid			Current LTM 3/31/2018		Moody's 12-18 Month Forward View As of 6/22/2018	
Factor 1 : Scale and Diversification (44%)	Measure	Score	Measure	Score	Measure	Score
a) Total Sales (USD Billion)	\$13.4	A	\$13 - \$15	A		
b) Geographic Diversification	A	A	A	A		
c) Segmental Diversification	Baa	Baa	Baa	Baa		
<b>Factor 2 : Franchise Strength and Potential (14%)</b>						
a) Market Share	A	A	A	A		
b) Category Assessment	A	A	A	A		
<b>Factor 3 : Profitability (7%)</b>						
a) EBIT Margin	11.0%	Ba	10% - 13%	Ba		
<b>Factor 4 : Financial Policy (14%)</b>						
a) Financial Policy	A	A	A	A		
<b>Factor 5 : Leverage and Coverage (21%)</b>						
a) Debt / EBITDA	3.3x	Baa	2.7x - 3.1x	Baa		
b) RCF / Net Debt	25.1%	Baa	22% - 26%	Baa		
c) EBIT / Interest Expense	8.3x	A	9x - 10x	A		
<b>Rating:</b>						
a) Indicated Rating from Grid		A3		A3		
b) Actual Rating Assigned						Baa1

All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

This represents Moody's forward view; not the view of the issuer; and does not incorporate significant acquisitions and divestitures (other than BSN Medical)

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™

## Ratings

Exhibit 10

Category	Moody's Rating
<b>ESSITY AKTIEBOLAG</b>	
Outlook	Stable
Issuer Rating	Baa1
Senior Unsecured	Baa1
ST Issuer Rating	P-2

Source: Moody's Investors Service

Exhibit 11

## Peer comparison

	Essity Aktiebolag			Kimberly-Clark Corporation			Procter & Gamble Company (The)		
	Baa1 Stable			A2 Stable			Aa3 Stable		
(in USD millions)	FYE Dec-16	FYE Dec-17	LTM Mar-18	FYE Dec-16	FYE Dec-17	LTM Mar-18	FYE Jun-16	FYE Jun-17	LTM Mar-18
Revenue	\$11,841	\$12,808	\$13,437	\$18,202	\$18,259	\$18,486	\$65,299	\$65,058	\$66,408
EBITDA	\$1,968	\$2,219	\$2,274	\$4,362	\$4,342	\$4,342	\$17,625	\$17,944	\$17,740
Total Debt	\$4,707	\$7,336	\$7,543	\$9,035	\$8,728	\$8,983	\$38,788	\$38,464	\$46,071
Cash & Cash Equiv.	\$472	\$533	\$669	\$923	\$616	\$626	\$7,102	\$5,569	\$5,326
EBIT Margin	10.9%	11.4%	11.0%	18.8%	18.4%	18.0%	21.7%	22.8%	22.0%
EBIT / Int. Exp.	8.9x	8.5x	8.3x	9.4x	9.2x	9.6x	17.9x	21.1x	20.5x
Debt / EBITDA	2.5x	3.2x	3.3x	2.1x	2.0x	2.1x	2.2x	2.1x	2.6x
RCF / Net Debt	28.0%	25.1%	25.1%	23.5%	24.3%	19.3%	21.3%	19.1%	26.9%
FCF / Debt	14.6%	10.5%	8.6%	13.5%	9.1%	10.2%	12.6%	6.0%	6.5%

All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™

Exhibit 12

## Reconciliation of debt

	12/31/2014	12/31/2015	12/31/2016	12/31/2017	03/31/2018 (LTM)
<b>As Reported Debt</b>	<b>39,906</b>	<b>34,008</b>	<b>36,149</b>	<b>54,124</b>	<b>56,992</b>
Pensions	4,529	2,917	4,662	3,804	3,804
Operating Leases	1,965	2,043	2,626	2,328	2,328
Non-Standard Adjustments	280	-977	-673	-195	48
<b>Moody's-Adjusted Debt</b>	<b>46,680</b>	<b>37,991</b>	<b>42,764</b>	<b>60,061</b>	<b>63,172</b>

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™

Exhibit 13

## Reconciliation of EBITDA

	12/31/2014	12/31/2015	12/31/2016	12/31/2017	03/31/2018 (LTM)
<b>As Reported EBITDA</b>	<b>13,068</b>	<b>15,552</b>	<b>14,809</b>	<b>18,036</b>	<b>18,439</b>
Pensions	52	149	134	-14	-14
Operating Leases	655	681	696	776	776
Unusual Items and Non-Standard Adjustments	-144	-934	1,189	133	-245
<b>Moody's-Adjusted EBITDA</b>	<b>13,631</b>	<b>15,448</b>	<b>16,828</b>	<b>18,931</b>	<b>18,956</b>

Moody's defines EBITDA as pretax income + gross interest expense + depreciation and amortisation

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™



Exhibit 14

## Overview of key metrics

(in USD millions)	31-Dec-14	31-Dec-15	31-Dec-16	31-Dec-17	31-Mar-18
<b>INCOME STATEMENT</b>					
Revenue	\$12,857.5	\$11,688.2	\$11,841.1	\$12,807.6	\$13,437.5
EBITDA	\$1,991.7	\$1,832.7	\$1,968.2	\$2,219.0	\$2,273.9
EBIT	\$1,277.1	\$1,195.4	\$1,296.2	\$1,466.1	\$1,480.9
Interest Expense	\$190.1	\$152.4	\$145.6	\$172.1	\$178.6
<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>					
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$521.4	\$577.7	\$471.8	\$532.8	\$669.3
Total Debt	\$5,963.0	\$4,506.4	\$4,707.3	\$7,335.6	\$7,543.1
Net Debt	\$5,441.6	\$3,928.7	\$4,235.5	\$6,802.9	\$6,873.8
<b>CASH FLOW</b>					
CAPEX	\$753.9	\$740.3	\$806.0	\$799.2	\$860.8
FFO	\$1,552.5	\$1,430.0	\$1,283.6	\$1,674.3	\$1,765.9
Dividends	\$33.3	\$25.6	\$22.2	\$33.4	\$34.2
Retained Cash Flow	\$1,519.2	\$1,404.3	\$1,261.4	\$1,640.9	\$1,731.7
RCF / Net Debt	24.4%	35.7%	28.0%	25.1%	25.1%
Free Cash Flow (FCF)	\$720.9	\$579.6	\$730.9	\$736.6	\$653.1
FCF / Debt	10.6%	12.9%	14.6%	10.5%	8.6%
<b>PROFITABILITY</b>					
% Change in Sales (YoY)	n.a.	12.0%	2.8%	7.9%	n.a.
EBIT Margin %	9.9%	10.2%	10.9%	11.4%	11.0%
EBITDA Margin %	15.5%	15.7%	16.6%	17.3%	16.9%
<b>INTEREST COVERAGE</b>					
EBIT / Interest Expense	6.7x	7.8x	8.9x	8.5x	8.3x
EBITDA / Interest Expense	10.5x	12.0x	13.5x	12.9x	12.7x
(EBITDA - CAPEX) / Interest Expense	6.5x	7.2x	8.0x	8.3x	7.9x
<b>LEVERAGE</b>					
Debt / EBITDA	3.4x	2.5x	2.5x	3.2x	3.3x
Debt / (EBITDA - CAPEX)	5.5x	4.1x	4.3x	5.0x	5.4x
Net Debt / EBITDA	3.1x	2.1x	2.3x	2.9x	3.0x

All ratios are based on 'Adjusted' financial data and incorporate Moody's Global Standard Adjustments for Non-Financial Corporations.

Source: Moody's Financial Metrics™

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