International Accounting Standard IAS 16

Property, Plant and Equipment

January 2012

(incorporating amendments from IFRSs issued up to 31 December 2011, including those with an effective date after 1 January 2012)

BASIS FOR CONCLUSIONS

CONTENTS

from paragraph

Basis for Conclusions on IAS 16 *Property, Plant and Equipment*

This Basis for Conclusions accompanies, but is not part of, IAS 16.

Introduction

BC1 This Basis for Conclusions summarises the International Accounting Standards Board's considerations in reaching its conclusions on revising IAS 16 *Property, Plant and Equipment* in 2003. Individual Board members gave greater weight to some factors than to others.

BC2 In July 2001 the Board announced that, as part of its initial agenda of technical projects, it would undertake a project to improve a number of Standards, including IAS 16. The project was undertaken in the light of queries and criticisms raised in relation to the Standards by securities regulators, professional accountants and other interested parties. The objectives of the Improvements project were to reduce or eliminate alternatives, redundancies and conflicts within Standards, to deal with some convergence issues and to make other improvements. In May 2002 the Board published its proposals in an Exposure Draft of *Improvements to International Accounting Standards*, with a comment deadline of 16 September 2002. The Board received over 160 comment letters on the Exposure Draft.

BC3 Because the Board's intention was not to reconsider the fundamental approach to the accounting for property, plant and equipment that was established by IAS 16, this Basis for Conclusions does not discuss requirements in IAS 16 that the Board has not reconsidered.

Scope

BC4 The Board clarified that the requirements of IAS 16 apply to items of property, plant and equipment that an entity uses to develop or maintain (a) biological assets and (b) mineral rights and mineral reserves such as oil, natural gas and similar non-regenerative resources. The Board noted that items of property, plant and equipment that an entity uses for these purposes possess the same characteristics as other items of property, plant and equipment.

Recognition

BC5 In considering potential improvements to the previous version of IAS 16, the Board reviewed its subsequent expenditure recognition principle for two reasons. First, the existing subsequent expenditure recognition principle did not align with the asset recognition principle in the *Framework*.[1] Second, the Board noted difficulties in practice in making the distinction it required between expenditures that maintain, and those that enhance, an item of property, plant and equipment. Some expenditures seem to do both.

1 References to the *Framework* are to IASC's *Framework for the Preparation and Presentation of Financial Statements*, adopted by the IASB in 2001. In September 2010 the IASB replaced the *Framework* with the *Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting*.

BC6 The Board ultimately decided that the separate recognition principle for subsequent expenditure was not needed. As a result, an entity will evaluate all its property, plant and equipment costs under IAS 16's general recognition principle. Also, if the cost of a replacement for part of an item of property, plant and equipment is recognised in the carrying amount of an asset, then an entity will derecognise the carrying amount of what was replaced to avoid carrying both the replacement and the replaced portion as assets. This derecognition occurs whether or not what is replaced is a part of an item that the entity depreciates separately.

BC7 The Board's decision on how to handle the recognition principles was not reached easily. In the Exposure Draft (ED), the Board proposed to include within IAS 16's general recognition principle only the recognition of subsequent expenditures that are replacements of a part of an item of property, plant and equipment. Also in the ED, the Board proposed to modify the subsequent expenditure recognition principle to distinguish more clearly the expenditures to which it would continue to apply.

BC8 Respondents to the ED agreed that it was appropriate for subsequent expenditures that were replacements of a part of an item of property, plant and equipment that an entity depreciated separately to be covered by the general recognition principle. However, the respondents argued, and the Board agreed, that the modified second principle was not clearer because it would result in an entity recognising in the carrying amount of an asset and then depreciating subsequent expenditures that were for the day-to-day servicing of items of property, plant and equipment, those that might commonly be regarded as for 'repairs and maintenance'. That result was not the Board's intention.

BC9 In its redeliberation of the ED, the Board concluded it could not retain the proposed modified subsequent expenditure recognition principle. It also concluded that it could not revert to the subsequent expenditure principle in the previous version of IAS 16 because, if it did, nothing was improved; the *Framework* conflict was not resolved and the practice issues were not addressed.

BC10 The Board concluded that it was best for all subsequent expenditures to be covered by IAS 16's general recognition principle. This solution had the following advantages:

(a) use of IAS 16's general recognition principle fits the *Framework.*

(b) use of a single recognition principle is a straightforward approach.

(c) retaining IAS 16's general recognition principle and combining it with the derecognition principle will result in financial statements that reflect what is occurring, ie both the flow of property, plant and equipment through an entity and the economics of the acquisition and disposal process.

(d) use of one recognition principle fosters consistency. With two principles, consistency is not achieved unless it is clear when each should apply. Because IAS 16 does not address what constitutes an 'item' of property, plant and equipment, this clarity was not assured because some might characterise a particular cost as the initial cost of a new item of property, plant and equipment and others might regard it as a subsequent cost of an existing item of property, plant and equipment.

BC11 As a consequence of placing all subsequent expenditures under IAS 16's general recognition principle, the Board also included those expenditures under IAS 16's derecognition principle. In the ED, the Board proposed the derecognition of the carrying amount of a part of an item that was depreciated separately and was replaced by a subsequent expenditure that an entity recognised in the carrying amount of the asset under the general recognition principle. With this change, replacements of a part of an item that are not depreciated separately are subject to the same approach.

BC12 The Board noted that some subsequent expenditures on property, plant and equipment, although arguably incurred in the pursuit of future economic benefits, are not sufficiently certain to be recognised in the carrying amount of an asset under the general recognition principle. Thus, the Board decided to state in the Standard that an entity recognises in profit or loss as incurred the costs of the day-to-day servicing of property, plant and equipment.

Measurement at recognition

Asset dismantlement, removal and restoration costs

BC13 The previous version of IAS 16 provided that in initially measuring an item of property, plant and equipment at its cost, an entity would include the cost of dismantling and removing that item and restoring the site on which it is located to the extent it had recognised an obligation for that cost. As part of its deliberations, the Board evaluated whether it could improve this guidance by addressing associated issues that have arisen in practice.

BC14 The Board concluded that the relatively limited scope of the Improvements project warranted addressing only one matter. That matter was whether the cost of an item of property, plant and equipment should include the initial estimate of the cost of dismantlement, removal and restoration that an entity incurs as a consequence of using the item (instead of as a consequence of acquiring it). Therefore, the Board did not address how an entity should account for (a) changes in the amount of the initial estimate of a recognised obligation, (b) the effects of accretion of, or changes in interest rates on, a recognised obligation or (c) the cost of obligations an entity did not face when it acquired the item, such as an obligation triggered by a law change enacted after the asset was acquired.

BC15 The Board observed that whether the obligation is incurred upon acquisition of the item or while it is being used, its underlying nature and its association with the asset are the same. Therefore, the Board decided that the cost of an item should include the costs of dismantlement, removal or restoration, the obligation for which an entity has incurred as a consequence of having used the item during a particular period other than to produce inventories during that period. An entity applies IAS 2 *Inventories* to the costs of these obligations that are incurred as a consequence of having used the item during a particular period to produce inventories during that period. The Board observed that accounting for these costs initially in accordance with IAS 2 acknowledges their nature. Furthermore, doing so achieves the same result as including these costs as an element of the cost of an item of property, plant and equipment, depreciating them over the production period just completed and identifying the depreciation charge as a cost to produce another asset (inventory), in which case the depreciation charge constitutes part of the cost of that other asset.

BC16 The Board noted that because IAS 16's initial measurement provisions are not affected by an entity's subsequent decision to carry an item under the cost model or the revaluation model, the Board's decision applies to assets that an entity carries under either treatment.

Asset exchange transactions

BC17 Paragraph 22 of the previous version of IAS 16 indicated that if (a) an item of property, plant and equipment is acquired in exchange for a similar asset that has a similar use in the same line of business and has a similar fair value or (b) an item of property, plant and equipment is sold in exchange for an equity interest in a similar asset, then no gain or loss is recognised on the transaction. The cost of the new asset is the carrying amount of the asset given up (rather than the fair value of the purchase consideration given for the new asset).

BC18 This requirement in the previous version of IAS 16 was consistent with views that:

(a) gains should not be recognised on exchanges of assets unless the exchanges represent the culmination of an earning process;

(b) exchanges of assets of a similar nature and value are not a substantive event warranting the recognition of gains; and

(c) requiring or permitting the recognition of gains from such exchanges enables entities to 'manufacture' gains by attributing inflated values to the assets exchanged, if the assets do not have observable market prices in active markets.

BC19 The approach described above raised issues about how to identify whether assets exchanged are similar in nature and value. The Board reviewed this topic, and noted views that:

(a) under the *Framework*, the recognition of income from an exchange of assets does not depend on whether the assets exchanged are dissimilar;

(b) income is not necessarily earned only at the culmination of an earning process, and in some cases it is arbitrary to determine when an earning process culminates;

(c) generally, under both measurement bases after recognition that are permitted under IAS 16, gain recognition is not deferred beyond the date at which assets are exchanged; and

(d) removing 'existing carrying amount' measurement of property, plant and equipment acquired in exchange for similar assets would increase the consistency of measurement of acquisitions of assets.

BC20 The Board decided to require in IAS 16 that all items of property, plant and equipment acquired in exchange for non-monetary assets or a combination of monetary and non-monetary assets should be measured at fair value, except that, if the exchange transaction lacks commercial substance or the fair value of neither of the assets exchanged can be determined reliably, then the cost of the asset acquired in the exchange should be measured at the carrying amount of the asset given up.

BC21 The Board added the 'commercial substance' test in response to a concern raised in the comments it received on the ED. This concern was that, under the Board's proposal, an entity would measure at fair value an asset acquired in a transaction that did not have commercial substance, ie the transaction did not have a discernible effect on an entity's economics. The Board agreed that requiring an evaluation of commercial substance would help to give users of the financial statements assurance that the substance of a transaction in which the acquired asset is measured at fair value (and often, consequentially, a gain on the disposal of the transferred asset is recognised in income) is the same as its legal form.

BC22 The Board concluded that in evaluating whether a transaction has commercial substance, an entity should calculate the present value of the post-tax cash flows that it can reasonably expect to derive from the portion of its operations affected by the transaction. The discount rate should reflect the entity's current assessment of the time value of money and the risks specific to those operations rather than those that marketplace participants would make.

BC23 The Board included the 'reliable measurement' test for using fair value to measure these exchanges to minimise the risk that entities could 'manufacture' gains by attributing inflated values to the assets exchanged. Taking into consideration its project for the convergence of IFRSs and US GAAP, the Board discussed whether to change the manner in which its 'reliable measurement' test is described. The Board observed this was unnecessary because it believes that its guidance and that contained in US GAAP are intended to have the same meaning.

BC24 The Board decided to retain, in IAS 18 *Revenue*, its prohibition on recognising revenue from exchanges or swaps of goods or services of a similar nature and value. The Board has on its agenda a project on revenue recognition and does not propose to make any significant amendments to IAS 18 until that project is completed.

Measurement after recognition

Revaluation model

BC25 The Board is taking part in research activities with national standard-setters on revaluations of property, plant and equipment. This research is intended to promote international convergence of standards. One of the most important issues is identifying the preferred measurement attribute for revaluations. This research could lead to proposals to amend IAS 16.

Depreciation: unit of measure

BC26 The Board's discussions about the potential improvements to the depreciation principle in the previous version of IAS 16 included consideration of the unit of measure an entity uses to depreciate its items of property, plant and equipment. Of particular concern to the Board were situations in which the unit of measure is the 'item as a whole' even though that item may be composed of significant parts with individually varying useful lives or consumption patterns. The Board did not believe that, in these situations, an entity's use of approximation techniques, such as a weighted average useful life for the item as a whole, resulted in depreciation that faithfully represents an entity's varying expectations for the significant parts.

BC27 The Board sought to improve the previous version of IAS 16 by proposing in the ED revisions to existing guidance on separating an item into its parts and then further clarifying in the Standard the need for an entity to depreciate separately any significant parts of an item of property, plant and equipment. By doing so an entity will also separately depreciate the item's remainder.

Depreciation: depreciable amount

BC28 During its discussion of depreciation principles, the Board noted the concern that, under the cost model, the previous version of IAS 16 does not state clearly why an entity deducts an asset's residual value from its cost to determine the asset's depreciable amount. Some argue that the objective is one of precision, ie reducing the amount of depreciation so that it reflects the item's net cost. Others argue that the objective is one of economics, ie stopping depreciation if, because of inflation or otherwise, an entity expects that during its useful life an asset will increase in value by an amount greater than it will diminish.

BC29 The Board decided to improve the previous version of IAS 16 by making clear the objective of deducting a residual value in determining an asset's depreciable amount. In doing so, the Board did not adopt completely either the 'net cost' or the 'economics' objective. Given the concept of depreciation as a cost allocation technique, the Board concluded that an entity's expectation of increases in an asset's value, because of inflation or otherwise, does not override the need to depreciate it. Thus, the Board changed the definition of residual value to the amount an entity could receive for the asset currently (at the financial reporting date) if the asset were already as old and worn as it will be when the entity expects to dispose of it. Thus, an increase in the expected residual value of an asset because of past events will affect the depreciable amount; expectations of future changes in residual value other than the effects of expected wear and tear will not.

Depreciation: depreciation period

BC30 The Board decided that the useful life of an asset should encompass the entire time it is available for use, regardless of whether during that time it is in use or is idle. Idle periods most commonly occur just after an asset is acquired and just before it is disposed of, the latter while the asset is held either for sale or for another form of disposal.

BC31 The Board concluded that, whether idle or not, it is appropriate to depreciate an asset with a limited useful life so that the financial statements reflect the consumption of the asset's service potential that occurs while the asset is held. The Board also discussed but decided not to address the measurement of assets held for sale. The Board concluded that whether to apply a different measurement model to assets held for sale—which may or may not be idle—was a different question and was beyond the scope of the Improvements project.

BC32 In July 2003 the Board published ED 4 *Disposal of Non-current Assets and Presentation of Discontinued Operations*. ED 4 was published as part of the Board's short-term convergence project, the scope of which was broader than that of the Improvements project. In ED 4, the Board proposed that an entity should classify some of its assets as 'assets held for sale' if specified criteria are met. Among other things, the Board proposed that an entity should cease depreciating an asset classified in this manner, irrespective of whether the asset is idle. The basis for this proposal was that the carrying amount of an asset held for sale will be recovered principally through sale rather than future operations, and therefore accounting for the asset should be a process of valuation rather than allocation. The Board will amend IAS 16 accordingly when ED 4 is finalised.

Depreciation: depreciation method

BC33 The Board considered how an entity should account for a change in a depreciation method. The Board concluded that a change in a depreciation method is a change in the technique used to apply the entity's accounting policy to recognise depreciation as an asset's future economic benefits are consumed. Therefore, it is a change in an accounting estimate.

Derecognition

Derecognition date

BC34 The Board decided that an entity should apply the revenue recognition principle in IAS 18 for sales of goods to its gains from the sales of items of property, plant and equipment. The requirements in that principle ensure the representational faithfulness of an entity's recognised revenue. Representational faithfulness is also the appropriate objective for an entity's recognised gains. However, in IAS 16, the revenue recognition principle's criteria drive derecognition of the asset disposed of rather than recognition of the proceeds received. Applying the principle instead to the recognition of the proceeds might lead to the conclusion that an entity will recognise a deferred gain. Deferred gains do not meet the definition of a liability under the *Framework*. Thus, the Board decided that an entity does not derecognise an item of property, plant and equipment until the requirements in IAS 18 to recognise revenue on the sale of goods are met.

Gain classification

BC35 Although the Board concluded that an entity should apply the recognition principle for revenue from sales of goods to its recognition of gains on disposals of items of property, plant and equipment, the Board concluded that the respective approaches to income statement display should differ. The Board concluded that users of financial statements would consider these gains and the proceeds from an entity's sale of goods in the course of its ordinary activities differently in their evaluation of an entity's past results and their projections of future cash flows. This is because revenue from the sale of goods is typically more likely to recur in comparable amounts than are gains from sales of items of property, plant and equipment. Accordingly, the Board concluded that an entity should not classify as revenue gains on disposals of items of property, plant and equipment.

Assets held for rental to others[2]

BC35A The Board identified that, in some industries, entities are in the business of renting and subsequently selling the same assets.

BC35B The Board noted that the Standard prohibits classification as revenue of gains arising from derecognition of items of property, plant and equipment. The Board also noted that paragraph BC35 states the reason for this is 'users of financial statements would consider these gains and the proceeds from an entity's sale of goods in the course of its ordinary activities differently in their evaluation of an entity's past results and their projections of future cash flows.'

BC35C Consistently with that reason, the Board concluded that entities whose ordinary activities include renting and subsequently selling the same assets should recognise revenue from both renting and selling the assets. In the Board's view, the presentation of gross selling revenue, rather than a net gain or loss on the sale of the assets, would better reflect the ordinary activities of such entities.

BC35D The Board concluded that the disclosure requirements of IAS 16, IAS 2 and IAS 18 would lead an entity to disclose relevant information for users.

BC35E The Board also concluded that paragraph 14 of IAS 7 *Statement of Cash Flows* should be amended to present within operating activities cash payments to manufacture or acquire such assets and cash receipts from rents and sales of such assets.

BC35F The Board discussed the comments received in response to its exposure draft of proposed *Improvements to International Financial Reporting Standards* published in 2007 and noted that a few respondents would prefer the issue to be included in one of the Board's major projects such as the revenue recognition project or the financial statement presentation project. However, the Board noted that the proposed amendment would improve financial statement presentation before

2 Paragraphs BC35A–BC35F were added as a consequence of amendments to IAS 16 by *Improvements to IFRSs* issued in May 2008. At the same time, the Board also amended paragraph 6 by replacing the term 'net selling price' in the definition of 'recoverable amount' with 'fair value less costs to sell' for consistency with the wording used in IFRS 5 *Non-current Assets Held for Sale and Discontinued Operations* and IAS 36 *Impairment of Assets*.

those projects could be completed and decided to add paragraph 68A as previously exposed. A few respondents raised the concern that the term 'held for sale' in the amendment could be confused with the notion of held for sale in accordance with IFRS 5 *Non-current Assets Held for Sale and Discontinued Operations*. Consequently, the Board clarified in the amendment that IFRS 5 should not be applied in those circumstances.

Transitional provisions

BC36 The Board concluded that it would be impracticable for an entity to determine retrospectively whether a previous transaction involving an exchange of non-monetary assets had commercial substance. This is because it would not be possible for management to avoid using hindsight in making the necessary estimates as of earlier dates. Accordingly, the Board decided that in accordance with the provisions of IAS 8 an entity should consider commercial substance only in evaluating the initial measurement of future transactions involving an exchange of non-monetary assets.

Summary of changes from the Exposure Draft

BC37 The main changes from the ED proposals to the revised Standard are as follows:

(a) The ED contained two recognition principles, one applying to subsequent expenditures on existing items of property, plant and equipment. The Standard contains a single recognition principle that applies to costs incurred initially to acquire an item and costs incurred subsequently to add to, replace part of or service an item. An entity applies the recognition principle to the latter costs at the time it incurs them.

(b) Under the approach proposed in the ED, an entity measured an item of property, plant and equipment acquired in exchange for a non-monetary asset at fair value irrespective of whether the exchange transaction in which it was acquired had commercial substance. Under the Standard, a lack of commercial substance is cause for an entity to measure the acquired asset at the carrying amount of the asset given up.

(c) Compared with the Standard, the ED did not as clearly set out the principle that an entity separately depreciates at least the parts of an item of property, plant and equipment that are of significant cost.

(d) Under the approach proposed in the ED, an entity derecognised the carrying amount of a replaced part of an item of property, plant and equipment if it recognised in the carrying amount of the asset the cost of the replacement under the general recognition principle. In the Standard, an entity also applies this approach to a replacement of a part of an item that is not depreciated separately.

(e) In finalising the Standard, the Board identified further necessary consequential amendments to IFRS 1, IAS 14, IAS 34, IAS 36, IAS 37, IAS 38, IAS 40, SIC-13, SIC-21, SIC-22 and SIC-32.

