



PRESS RELEASE

SOL Group strengthens its international presence in South America, entering the technical gases sector, in a strategic partnership with the primary Ecuadorian Group “CONAUTO”.

SOL acquired from the shareholders of CONAUTO Group the 50% plus one share of “SWISSGAS” and “ICP – INDUSTRIAS CRIOGENICAS DEL PERU” companies, both companies operates in the technical gases sector, respectively in Ecuador and in Peru.

SOL’s and CONAUTO’s shareholders aim to consolidate their operations as primary players in Ecuador and grow in the neighbouring Countries.

SOL S.p.A. (“SOL”) and CONAUTO Group (CONAUTO”) today announce the startup of a strategic partnership, aiming to strengthen the international presence of the Italian Group in South America, and consolidate the presence of the primary Ecuadorian Group in the technical gases sector in Ecuador, Peru and in the neighbouring Countries.

More specifically, AIRSOL srl, a 100% SOL S.p.A.’s controlled subsidiary, purchased from the shareholders of the CONAUTO Group 50% plus one shares of SWISSGAS and ICP – INDUSTRIAS CRIOGENICAS DEL PERU’, respectively operating in Ecuador and in Peru in the technical gases sector. The SWISSGAS and ICP activities generate combined sales of about 12 million US Dollars, directly employing 98 people. The transactions have been completed at market price, in line with similar operations in the technical gases market.

With this operation, SOL Group secures a strategic alliance with a distinguished Ecuadorian Family Group, with whom will engage in a program aimed at speeding up SWISSGAS and ICP’s growth in the industrial and medicinal gases sector as well as in the home care sector, in the Ecuadorian and in the neighbouring Countries markets.

Established in 2012, SWISSGAS has been able to become one of the most important players in the Ecuadorian market, where has invested in an air separation unit and in an acetylene plant in Duran, as well as in two filling stations in Duran and Quito. SWISSGAS supplies industrial, medicinal, pure and special gases, to industrial customers in Ecuador and Peru and enjoys several very important hospitals among its customers in Ecuador. Whilst recently established ICP is active in Peru where it operates a cylinder filling station at Chiclayo.

Headquartered in Guayaquil, CONAUTO was established in 1970, and it represents the business offspring of “MAX MULLER Y CIA”, a company which had been established in 1865 by the Swiss entrepreneur Max Muller, who grew and expanded benefitting from the ramping business trade between Europe and South America. Today, after a long history of successes, CONAUTO Group enjoys a solid business and crystalline reputation and it is organised in several companies active in different sectors in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Vietnam such as automobile industry components, tyres regeneration, lubricants production and distribution, agroindustry, tropical juices production and tourism. CONAUTO Group’s activities generate sales in excess of 800 million US \$ and enjoys a shareholding made of some Ecuadorian and Swiss families that have successfully led the different activities for more than 60 years.

Aldo Fumagalli Romario, Chairman and Managing Director of SOL group, has commented: *“This partnership with CONAUTO Group represents for SOL Group, after Brazil where we operate in the home care sector, a new important move as it is our first step to enter the technical gases sector in South America. Moreover, this alliance combines the experience and the competences*

of our Group with those of a dynamic, successful Ecuadorian Group with great traditions. We have in fact discovered that we share with CONAUTO the same values and priorities guiding both our daily and strategic decisions. We believe that combining SOL's technological competences and innovative solutions in the technical and medical gases and in the home care sectors, with the great experience and knowledge of CONAUTO Group and its shareholders in key South American markets such as Ecuador, Peru and Colombia will trigger a further strong development of SWISSGAS and ICP, returning big satisfactions to all our new Ecuadorian partners and colleagues".

*"We are glad – said **Marco Annoni**, Deputy Chairman and Managing Director of SOL Group – to working together with the management team and our news colleagues of SWISSGAS and ICP, and send them greetings on behalf of all our SOL's colleagues. This partnership is one of the most important components of our continued and recent initiatives in new emerging markets in the technical gases sector. I am sure that it will represent a strengthening and clear step ahead for all the shareholders of SWISSGAS. We believe that joining our forces with CONAUTO will allow SWISSGAS to achieve an even more dynamic growth in its markets, bringing big satisfactions to all our new Ecuadorian partners and colleagues".*

René Konanz, Chairman of the CONAUTO Group and CEO of SWISSGAS, has commented: *"It is a privilege to join forces with SOL Group in order to become an important player in the technical gases market in the Latin American market. SOL has a vast international experience in the production, research of applications and sale of these products, as well as in the Home Medical Care. We are excited for the future ahead working together with our new Italian partners. This joint venture will definitely help us grow in these markets and are looking forward to a long lasting relation with SOL Group".*

SOL is a multinational Group, that operates in Europe, in Turkey, in Morocco, in Brazil, in China and in India, in two different prevalent sectors: that one of the productions, applied research and sale of technical gases, pure and medicinal (Technical Gases Division) and in that one of the Home Medical Care (Home Care Division), with more than 1,100 million € of sales in 2021, and more than 5,100 employees.

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