

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**SOL GROUP: the Board of Directors has approved the first half 2005 results, prepared according to IAS/IFRS accounting standards.**

**Consolidated sales € 174,2 ml, up 9.5% on the same period of 2004, gross operating margin of € 40,1 ml, equal to 23.0% on sales, consolidated net profits of € 9,5 ml and cash flow of € 27,8 ml.**

Consolidated sales of **€ 174,2 ml**, up 9.5% on the same period of 2004 (€ 159,2 ml at 30.06.04), gross operating margin of **€ 40,1 ml** (23.0% on sales) increasing vs. **€ 38,6 ml** of 30.06.04, despite in first half 2004 there was a capital gain realized on the sale of an instrumental building, consolidated net profits of **€ 9,5 ml**, slightly decreasing vs. € 10 ml of 30.06.04 due to more financial costs.

These are the highlights specified in the first half 2005 results, approved by the Board of Directors of SOL S.p.A. a listed company on the Italian Stock Exchange that acts as holding company to a multinational group of 44 companies, with 1,500 employees, involved in the area of technical gases and home-care assistance, operating in 15 European countries.

The excellent growth of sales is due to the strong development on sales abroad (**+17.2%**) and to the good trend of the activity in Italy (**+5.9%**) despite of the unfavourable macroeconomic scenario and the continuing great increase of the energy costs.

In comparison to the first half 2004, the technical gases business increased the sales by **6.6%**, while the home-care business, in which the Group operates through VIVISOL, by **18.5%**.

In financial terms, operating cash flow is **€ 27.8 ml** (€ 26.6 ml in the same period of 2004), the total net debt is **€ 82.5 ml**, increased by € 7.3 ml vs. 30.06.04, despite investments made for **€ 35,6 ml** that are going to increase substantially the production capacity and which confirm the trend to development and to technological innovation of SOL Group.

Referring to the relevant subsequent events after 30.06.2005, we inform that has been made a merger through incorporation of VIVISOL Brescia S.r.l. into VIVISOL S.r.l.

*“Despite the lasting uncertain climate which continue to characterize the economic contest, particularly unfavorable during the first half specially in Italy, the positive results achieved underline our capacity to growing, based on innovation and diversification”* affirmed Marco Annoni, Vice-President of SOL S.p.A.

*“In the year 2005”,* concluded SOL Chairman Aldo Fumagalli Romario, *“we expect to consolidate the increasing trend of turnover and to improve the profitability of the Group.”*

Monza, September 30, 2005