Chief Executive's Report

Financial Overview

Financial Performance

Our consolidated financial results must be viewed in light of the Restructuring and Merger as described in our Prospectus dated 15 July 2002. The results of BOCHK, our principal operating subsidiary, for the first half of 2001 were the combined results of the merging entities before the reorganisation. As these entities were previously operating autonomously with different risk and financial control systems, these results may not be representative of the consolidated results of the Group. After the merger, we have adopted common provisioning standard and alignment of classification to all accounts of the merging entities. **When drawing comparisons of the financial results of the Group for the first half of 2002 with those of the corresponding period last year, we would like to draw your attention to the above-mentioned differences.**

In the first six months of 2002, we strove to develop our business as planned against the backdrop of a difficult and challenging operating environment, and achieved a consolidated profit attributable to shareholders of HK$3,418 million. This results represented 54.4% of our profit forecast for the year 2002.

In the first half of 2002, the Group launched a range of new products and services and improved profitability through optimising our asset-liability mix and adjusting our pricing. We reduced our non-performing loan ratio through a combination of disposal of loans (including non-performing loans) to Bank of China Grand Cayman Branch, write-off of bad and doubtful debts, aggressive collection efforts, and the implementation of a comprehensive credit risk management system, etc. In addition, we continued to place emphasis on the rationalisation of our branch network and improvement in efficiency, which have significantly reduced our staff costs.

Our Group's net profit attributable to shareholders in the first half of 2002 represented a decrease of 18.5% as compared with the first half of 2001. Operating profit before provisions decreased by 15.7% to HK$6,002 million in the first half of 2002.

After taking the effect of the share consolidation into account, earnings per share as adjusted for the six months ended 30 June 2002 was HK$0.323. Return on average total assets and return on average shareholders' funds on an annualised basis were 0.93% and 12.92%, respectively.

Net interest income

Net interest income was HK$6,891 million for the first half of 2002, a decrease of HK$843 million or 10.9% from the corresponding period in 2001. Net interest spread rose by 25 basis points to 1.85%, while net interest margin rose marginally by 1 basis point to 1.98%. Increased holdings of higher yielding securities helped improve net interest margin by 14 basis points. This was offset by a 23 basis points reduction in contribution from cost free fund as a result of the drastic fall in market interest rates, coupled with an 11 basis points reduction in contribution from mortgages as a result of reduction in mortgage yield.

Financial Overview *(continued)*

Other operating income

Other operating income totalled HK$2,010 million in the first half of 2002, a fall of HK$246 million or 10.9% from the first half of 2001. Fees and commission income declined by 7.6% to HK$1,705 million. In the first half of 2002, we explored business opportunities and accomplished significant growth in return from sale of funds, etc. However, the increased contribution from our investment product services was offset by a drop in fees and commission income generated from bills, stock brokerage and loan origination due to poor market conditions and more intense competitions. Fees and commission expenses fell by 7.5% to HK$357 million. As a result, net fees and commission income declined by 7.7% as compared with the same period in 2001.

Operating expenses

Operating expenses in the first half of 2002 amounted to HK$2,899 million, representing an increase of HK$31 million or 1.1% as compared with the same period in 2001. The increase in operating expenses was primarily due to the increase in depreciation expenses arising from the revaluation of our premises.

The depreciation expenses rose by HK$146 million or 68.5% to HK$359 million in the first half of 2002. If we excluded the depreciation expenses related to our own fixed assets, the operating expenses would have recorded a decrease of HK$115 million or 4.3% as compared with the corresponding period in 2001. This decline was largely due to cost synergies from the merger and ongoing restructuring.

Other operating expenses also increased by HK$45 million or 12% to HK$419 million, mainly attributable to the rise in advertising expenses.

The increase in depreciation and other operating expenses was partially offset by the decline in staff costs and premises and equipment expenses (excluding depreciation). Staff costs (including directors' emoluments) declined by HK$144 million or 7.6% to HK$1,761 million, due to a reduction in number of staff as part of our rationalisation initiatives. The number of staff was 13,191 as at 30 June 2002, representing a decrease of 8.3% as compared with the end of first half of 2001. Premises and equipment expenses (excluding depreciation) fell by HK$16 million or 4.3% to HK$360 million.

As a result of a decrease in operating income and a modest increase in operating expenses, the cost to income ratio rose from 28.7% for the first half of 2001 to 32.6% for the same period of 2002.

Financial Overview *(continued)*

Asset Quality

Net charge for bad and doubtful debts

In the first half of 2002, the net charge for bad and doubtful debts (net of recoveries of advances and releases of specific provisions) decreased by HK$82 million or 4.4% to HK$1,766 million, as compared with that over the same period in 2001. Total recoveries of advances previously written off were HK$350 million for the first half of 2002, 52.8% more than those in the same period in 2001. This improvement stemmed from our focus on loan recoveries and setting up of our Special Assets Management Department.

Non-performing loans

As at 30 June 2002, non-performing loans decreased by HK$7,014 million or 19.8% to HK$28,498 million, as compared with 31 December 2001. The decline was a result of the disposal of loans with total gross book value of HK$11,401 million (of which HK$7,029 million are non-performing loans) to Bank of China Grand Cayman Branch in June 2002. The write-off of the bad and doubtful debts amounting to HK$1,013 million also helped lower our non-performing loans. As a result, the percentage of non-performing loans to total gross advances to customers reduced from 10.99% as at 31 December 2001 to 8.97% as at 30 June 2002.

Our Group has employed a prudent and conservative policy in making provision for bad and doubtful debts, complying with the guidelines set by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

Specific provisions coverage ratio for non-performing loans and loan loss provision ratio improved from 29.8% and 48.2% as at 31 December 2001 to 31.6% and 54.5% respectively as at 30 June 2002. The ratio of total provisions for bad and doubtful debts to gross advances to customers fell to 4.9%, as compared with 5.3% at the end of last year.

Financial Position

Assets

As at 30 June 2002, total assets decreased by HK$28,362 million or 3.7% as compared with 31 December 2001. After the merger, operating as a locally incorporated independent entity, BOCHK has its own liquidity management policies and mechanism. Consequently, it withdrew the inter-bank placement of HK$54,635 million with Bank of China, resulting in a drop in total assets. During the first half of 2002, the Hong Kong market continued to experience sluggish loan demand. Our gross advances to customers decreased by HK$5,404 million or 1.7% as compared with 31 December 2001. This fall was primarily due to our loan disposal in June 2002. However, excluding the loan disposal in June 2002, the Group's advances to customers would have recorded a rise of 1.9%.

Financial Overview *(continued)*

In terms of geographical dispersion of our loan portfolio, Hong Kong related loans accounted for the majority, down by HK$5,061 million or 1.6%. Loans in connection with Mainland China fell by HK$1,405 million or 18.1% and loans to other geographical areas grew by HK$1,062 million or 24.5%. We will continue to develop our Mainland China business solidly.

The Group has further optimised the asset structure by revising its investment strategies to enhance yield on assets. The Group increased its exposure to debt securities relative to inter-bank placements. Certificates of deposit held, held-to-maturity securities, investment securities and other investments in securities as at 30 June 2002 amounted to HK$168,836 million, representing 22.9% of total assets, and the total balance increased by HK$42,161 million from HK$126,675 million as at 31 December 2001, an increase of 33.3%.

Liabilities

As at 30 June 2002, total liabilities decreased by HK$29,864 million or 4.2% as compared with 31 December 2001. This decline was attributable to the withdrawal of inter-bank funds of approximately HK$41,000 million by Bank of China.

Despite the fall in customer deposits in Hong Kong during the first half of 2002, the Group was able to maintain a stable customer deposit base. Deposit balance increased by HK$5,042 million or 0.8% from 31 December 2001. In an effort to manage the cost of funding, the Group sought to optimise the deposit structure and revised the deposit pricing strategy to be in line with our peers during the first half of 2002. The tightening of the interest rate gap between fixed deposits and savings deposits persisted in the first half of 2002, resulting in fixed deposits funds shifting to more liquid savings deposits. This lowered our overall cost of funding.

Lackluster loan demand in Hong Kong together with the loan disposal resulted in a decrease of the loans to deposits ratio from 53.3% as at 31 December 2001 to 52% as at 30 June 2002.

As at 30 June 2002, the Group had no significant mismatches between assets and liabilities in all foreign currencies and hence the exposure to currency risks was limited.

Liquidity and capital strength

The Group maintained ample liquidity with the average liquidity ratio of 41.3% for the first half of 2002, as compared with 39.9% for the 3 months from 1 October 2001 (the date of the Restructuring and Merger) to 31 December 2001. We remained well capitalised with a capital adequacy ratio of 14.7% as at 30 June 2002, as compared with 14.4% as at 31 December 2001.

Operations Review

In the first half of 2002, we continued to leverage our strengths and capitalise on the opportunities arising from the Restructuring and Merger. We successfully introduced a broad range of new products and services, further rationalised our branch network, and made good progress in our business.

Retail Banking

To improve distribution efficiency, we continued to reengineer our distribution channels. In the first half of 2002, we combined 8 branches with their neighboring branches, established a new branch, and reduced the number of branches to 358. We began our "Model branches" pilot program for different types of branches, including Full Service Branches, Investment Centers, Personal Financial Service Centers, Self Service Branches and VIP Branches. We are now working on site selection and layout design. We will complete the pilot program and commence operation by the end of this year or early next year.

We have continued to provide diversified mortgage products and services. In the first half of 2002, our residential mortgages in Hong Kong, excluding those under the Home Ownership Scheme, rose by 3.9%. We have also launched a number of new or improved personal loan products, such as "Urban Renewal Authority Home Bridging Loan", "Standby Overdraft" and "Decoration Loan", which will further facilitate cash management of our customers. We have also offered credit facilities secured by investment funds to our investment customers to allow greater flexibility in managing their investments.

To better serve our customers, we have introduced a broader range of wealth management products and services, including "Guaranteed Fund", "Retail Bonds", "Equity Linked Deposit" (a product combining the features of term deposit and stock option), "Monthly Stocks Savings Plan", etc. In addition, we have begun to introduce the Customer Relationship Management ("CRM") System. We are currently expanding our financial consulting team to meet future needs.

During the first half of 2002, sale of retail bonds amounted to HK$2,487 million. In addition, the sale of 8 guaranteed funds amounted to HK$3,081 million. Among those, "BOCHK BOCI-Prudential AUD Australia Growth Guaranteed Fund" was the first non-US dollar denominated guaranteed fund in Hong Kong and was warmly received by the market. Another product — the "Currency Option Deposit" doubled in transaction volume when compared with that in the first half of last year.

Operations Review *(continued)*

The credit card business continues to be one of our core businesses. For the first half of 2002, the number of cards, credit card receivables and cardholder spending experienced double-digit growth as compared with the same period last year. We successfully launched the "Y-not" credit card to target our female customers, which increased our customer base by about 25,000 cards. The Great Wall International Card is another focus product of our credit card business. We achieved over 110% growth in the number of Great Wall International Card issued as compared with that in the same period of last year. We were the first in the market to provide RMB credit cards to our customers. Our merchant acquiring business remains healthy with a 2% growth in Hong Kong and 17% rapid growth in China. We continue to maintain our leading position in Mainland China.

In light of the persistent sluggish economic environment, and rising personal bankruptcies in Hong Kong, our annualised credit card charge-off ratio increased to 7.45% in the first half of 2002. To safeguard our asset quality, we have reviewed and tightened our credit policies.

Corporate Banking

We have a strong position in the local corporate and commercial lending markets. In addition to continuously building close bilateral banking relationships with our corporate customers, we are actively leveraging our restructuring and merger and our extensive corporate customer network to develop our syndicated loan business more effectively. By shifting our focus to an arranger role rather than a participant role in syndicated loan transactions, we intend to increase our non-interest income and enhance our position in the syndicated loan market.

For our small and medium-sized enterprise ("SME") customers, we have introduced unsecured financing schemes. We have also joined and launched the SME installations and Equipment Loan Guarantee Scheme introduced by the HKSAR Government to help enhance productivity and competitiveness of our SME customers.

We have established a very cooperative relationship with our parent, Bank of China, in a variety of areas, including corporate lending, financial institution services, settlement, treasury, trade finance and custodian services, etc. Some of these areas have already shown good progress.

Financial Institution Services

In addition to the unilateral clearing for HK dollar cheque for Shenzhen, we have been mandated as the HK dollar cheque bilateral clearing agency for both Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Mainland China after the signing of business and service agreements with the local authorities.

We have actively taken part in developing the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Real Time Gross Settlement ("RTGS") System in order to provide real time, safe and low cost electronic means of fund transfer between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Operations Review *(continued)*

Treasury

We have developed a customer-driven treasury platform and set up dedicated treasury teams to provide marketing and sales support and expertise to our key customers for sophisticated treasury products. Benefiting from our large customer base, extensive distribution channels and synergies created by the restructuring, we have successfully enhanced the cross selling of our treasury products and services. By the end of June 2002, the number of our treasury customers doubled when compared with the end of last year. By expanding Mainland China related products and services, our deposits from small to medium sized Mainland China financial institutions increased 6% in the first half of 2002.

China Related Business and Mainland Branches

The Group has a total of fourteen Mainland branches. Twelve of these branches are eligible for conducting full foreign currency services to all kinds of customers including local individuals and locally funded enterprises in China. Three of our Mainland branches are eligible to conduct RMB business on a limited scope. Another five branches have applied for the license to provide RMB business to foreign individuals and foreign funded enterprises.

As a result of the China's entry into the World Trade Organisation, we are cooperating closely with Mainland China to fully exploit the potential of future business opportunities. We have recently joined hands with Bank of China Shenzhen Branch to provide Automated Fund Transfer ("AFT"), a service for Hong Kong residents who have purchased properties in Mainland China. A variety of mortgage repayment plans with currency options were introduced to increase payment flexibility for our customers.

Back-office Operations

We have further standardised our back-office operations. Through improving our workflow and upgrading our system functions, we have enhanced our operational efficiency, manpower and thus achieved cost savings. Also by centralising the loans documentary management, we have saved storage space and hence reduced our operating costs. During the first half of the year, we completed the feasibility study and finalised the blueprint of the Global Payment System Project and Information Processing Centralisation Project. For the Credit Workflow System Project, the first phase of system development has kicked off and it will be scheduled to launch in the fourth quarter this year. We expect most of our loan processes will be automated upon completion.

Operations Review *(continued)*

Information Technology

We have begun to transform our information technology organisation and significantly upgrade our current information infrastructure to allow us to better support our current business operations as well as our business strategies. During the first half of 2002, a number of key projects made solid progress.

Human Resources

In alignment with the initial public offering, we have designed the Stock Option Scheme and Sharesave Plan in the first half of this year, and are actively seeking to reform the existing compensation and incentive mechanism. At the same time, we have initiated work on enhancing our employee profile within our organisational structure. To improve the quality of employees, we have expanded the training efforts for senior to middle management and front-line staff. Coupled with this is our recruitment activity, which targets experienced professionals in the market to cater for business development needs.

In the first half of 2002, the number of employees of the Group reduced by 237 to 13,191.

Prospects

The outlook for Hong Kong's economy enters into a phase of uncertainty following the tumble of the world equity markets in July 2002. The interest rate hike in the U.S. and Hong Kong anticipated earlier this year might not come about. Instead, speculation is building up for a lowering of interest rates, which would put further pressure on the interest rate margin and return from cost free funds. Against this background, the banking environment in the second half of 2002 will remain difficult.

Despite the difficult operating environment, we will continue to build on our core strengths and exploit new opportunities arising from our restructuring and the initial public offering so as to enhance shareholders' value.

Working with Bank of China, Bank of China Group affiliates and leading third parties, we plan to develop and distribute a broader portfolio of products and services to increase our penetration rate and cross-selling ratio. We will focus on higher ROE and innovative business, particularly in the areas of wealth management.

We will continue to improve our asset quality by adopting more effective credit control and risk management systems.

We will continue to capture significant efficiency and synergy gains by upgrading information technology systems and streamlining our branch network and back offices.

We will continue to improve our overall balance sheet management so as to optimise our asset liability mix, capital sourcing and yield.

By leveraging our customer base in Hong Kong and our existing 14 Mainland branches, we will fully exploit the business opportunities resulting from the further opening of the financial and banking markets in Mainland China. With extensive branch network in Mainland China, Bank of China's franchise will give BOCHK a unique international gateway into China.

We are committed to providing efficient and quality financial services to our customers. With the continued support of our shareholders, customers and staff, we are confident that we can achieve better results in the years to come.

LIU Jinbao
Vice Chairman and Chief Executive
Hong Kong, 27 August 2002