

BHP BILLITON LTD
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MOU SIGNED FOR SALE OF MAJORITY STAKE IN COLUMBUS STAINLESS

BHP Billiton Plc (BHP Billiton) today announced the signing of a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partners of the Columbus Stainless Steel Joint Venture (Columbus) and the Spanish stainless steel producer, Acerinox S.A. (Acerinox), for the sale of 64 per cent of the joint venture.

Acerinox is listed on the Spanish Stock Exchange and is the world's fifth largest producer of stainless steel. BHP Billiton believes that the proposed transaction will provide Columbus with a stronger outlook in the consolidating global stainless steel environment.

The three equal partners in Columbus are Samancor, Highveld Steel and Vanadium Corporation Limited, and the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa. BHP Billiton holds its interest in Columbus via its 60 per cent ownership of Samancor. The sale will result in BHP Billiton's effective interest in Columbus reducing from 20 per cent to 7.2 per cent.

The consideration for the transaction is 5.8 million Acerinox shares, subscribed equally by the partners. These shares equate to an 8.8 per cent interest in the increased issued share capital of Acerinox.

The proposed transaction is subject to negotiating binding agreements and obtaining regulatory approvals. It is expected to be effective from 1 January 2002, following the incorporation of the joint venture. BHP Billiton will take a charge, after tax and minority interests, of US\$50 million to attributable profit in the results to 30 June 2001.

Further information can be found on our Internet site:
<http://www.bhpbilliton.com>

ENQUIRIES:

Australia
Dr. Robert Porter, Investor Relations
Tel: + 61 3 9609 3540
Mobile: +61 419 587 456
email: Robert.Porter@bhpbilliton.com

Mandy Frostick, Media Relations
Tel: +61 3 9609 4157
Mobile: +61 419 546 245
email: Mandy.J.Frostick@bhpbilliton.com

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United Kingdom

Marc Gonsalves, Investor Relations & Communications

email: Marc.Gonsalves@bhpbilliton.com

Tel: +44 20 7747 3956

Mobile: +44 7768 264 950

South Africa

Michael Campbell, Investor & Media Relations

Tel: +27 11 376 3360

Mobile +27 82 458 2587

email: Michael.J.Campbell@bhpbilliton.com

United States

Francis McAllister, Investor Relations

Tel: +1 713 961 8625

Mobile: +1 713 480 3699

email: Francis.R.McAllister@bhpbilliton.com