

Embargo: March 31, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. (Brussels time)

**SOLVAY SOLEXIS FOCUSES R&D ON LOW CARBON ENERGY SOURCES
AND FRESH WATER FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION*****Solvay reinvests on average 6% of Specialty Polymers sales in R&D***

Solvay announces today that its specialty polymers affiliate Solvay Solexis is going to focus a substantial part of its Research & Development efforts on two critical themes for the global challenges facing this planet: developing energy sources with low carbon intensity and fulfill the increasing need for fresh water for human consumption. This decision reinforces the global position of Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers as a developer of innovative solutions for high-performance applications, combining very strong mechanical properties and very high temperature resistance and products with outstanding chemical inertness, high purity and dielectric qualities.

This Strategic Business Unit realized sales of 805 million EUR in 2009 (2008: 998 million EUR). On average Solvay reinvests about 6% of its specialty polymers sales in R&D. Specialty Polymers' R&D budget was maintained in 2009 despite the unfavorable economic circumstances.

The overall R&D effort of Solvay Solexis in the area of energy and water will amount to a sizeable part of its total R&D budget, while the projected sales growth for these applications are likely to deliver a significant part of Solvay Solexis' total sales growth in the coming 5 years, estimated over 100 million EUR. In the latest United Nations World Water Development Report (March 2009) fresh water demand is estimated to grow by about 64 billion cubic meters every year due to world population growth. For the same reason global energy demand is set to increase substantially, while the need to mitigate climate change will drive an even stronger demand for low carbon energy sources.

A new dedicated R&D group will consolidate the expertise acquired about these fast moving applications and expand it. It will also create synergy between the current different technology platforms as to enhance the existing products and expand its offering, and will leverage on the research, development & technology centers that Solvay is creating in Asia to boost its development with regional technology leaders. More information about the existing products and their applications is available on the next page in the [notes to the editors](#).

"Achieving sustainable development harbors formidable opportunities, not only in business terms but also as a strong motivator for all our stakeholders. We strongly believe that we have a formidable range of fluoromaterial solutions to help the industry in these areas and that the excellence of our R&D teams will expand the value we can bring to our partners further down in the value chain", comments Pierre Joris, Managing Director of Solvay Solexis. "By developing and innovating its unique selection of high-performance specialty polymers for the growing basic human needs, Solvay is delivering solutions to its customers to help them taking on the global challenges", adds Augusto Di Donfrancesco, General Manager of Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers.

SOLVAY is an international industrial Group active in Chemistry. It offers a broad range of products and solutions that contribute to improving quality of life. The Group is headquartered in Brussels and employs about 19,000 people in 50 countries. In 2009, its consolidated sales amounted to EUR 8.5 billion. Solvay is listed on the NYSE Euronext stock exchange in Brussels (NYSE Euronext: [SOLB.BE](#) - Bloomberg: [SOLB.BB](#) - Reuters: [SOLBt.BR](#)). Details are available at www.solvay.com.

For further information please contact:

ERIK DE LEYE

Corporate Press Officer

SOLVAY S.A.

Tel: +32 2 509 7230

erik.deleye@solvay.comwww.solvaypress.com**PATRICK VERELST**

Head of Investor Relations

SOLVAY S.A.

Tel: +32 2 509 7243

patrick.verelst@solvay.comwww.solvay-investors.com

Ce communiqué de presse est également disponible en français - Dit persbericht is ook in het Nederlands beschikbaar

NOTES TO THE EDITORS

Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers offers today one of the broadest selections of unique high-performance polymers. This selection contains among others polymers combining very strong mechanical properties and very high temperature resistance and products with outstanding chemical inertness, high purity and dielectric qualities. These plastics open the way to numerous applications to replace traditional materials for highly demanding applications. Among their main outlets are critical applications in aircraft and aerospace, oil & gas extraction, automotive applications, membranes for water purification and proton exchange membranes, battery binders and also dental and surgical objects, implantable medical devices, membranes for medical applications, colostomy bags, catheters and pouches or blister packaging for pharmaceuticals. Its strategy is based on creating and capturing growth in high-performance polymers, innovation and globalization and selective capacity extensions. In all, more than 1000 innovative projects are currently underway and more than 200 patents were filed in the last five years.

Water treatment

Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers produces among others materials used to fabricate water filtration membranes used in water purification plants. The filter membranes allow the passage of water, but prevent the passage of harmful bacteria and pathogens. These materials can be used to produce fresh water for human consumption from surface, ground, brackish and salty waters. In the latest United Nations World Water Development Report (March 2009) fresh water demand is estimated to grow by about 64 billion cubic meters every year due to world population growth.

Among the products and applications already used in microporous membranes for water treatment are [Solef® PVDF](#) (polyvinylidene fluoride), [Halar® ECTFE](#) (Ethylene/chlorotrifluoroethylene copolymer), [Udel® PSU](#) (polysulfone) and [Veradel® PESU](#) (polyethersulfone).

Energy

Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers also has a large selection of products for energy applications. These products are helping to increase energy-efficiency or decrease its carbon intensity and this way help to decrease the ecological footprint of human activity. Due to the increase of the global population and the need to limit greenhouse gas emissions in order to mitigate climate change, global demand for low carbon energy sources and applications is set to increase substantially.

An example in the field of promising new energy technology applications are Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) Fuel Cells which can achieve better performance by using [Aquivion™ PFSA](#) (perfluoro sulfonic acid polymer) membranes. Hydrogen-powered PEM Fuel Cells produce clean electric power with a higher efficiency than combustion engines. Solvay has recently [announced](#) it will build one of the largest PEM Fuel Cells in the world on the SolVin site near Antwerp, Belgium. This installation with an electric power capacity of up to 1.7 MW will demonstrate the robustness of Solvay's innovative specialty polymers in the harsh conditions inside a PEM Fuel Cell.

Another example are Lithium-Ion batteries in which the newest grades of [Solef® PVDF](#) (polyvinylidene fluoride) used as binder increase the energy density by up to 40%, decreasing cost and weight. Decreasing cost and increasing energy efficiency of the Lithium-ion batteries makes more mobile and automotive applications possible.

A third example is [Halar® ECTFE](#) (Ethylene/chlorotrifluoroethylene copolymer) which can be applied as ultra-resistant protection film on the front-sheets of photovoltaic cells. This solution is used to protect the ultrathin photovoltaic cells on the solar-powered airplane Solar Impulse. Solef®/Hylar® PVDF and Halar® ECTFE have also been specified widely for the back-sheets of solar PV panels.

Solvay's Strategic Business Unit Specialty Polymers encompasses three companies, Solvay Solexis, Solvay Advanced Polymers and Solvay Padanaplast and the PVDC business of Vinyls producer SolVin. Solvay Solexis is a major provider of high-end fluorinated material solutions. Solvay Advanced Polymers produces high-performance and ultra-performance plastics. Padanaplast is a world leader in crosslinking and flame retardant compounds in selected and sustainable markets. These companies are fully-owned subsidiaries of the Solvay group. SolVin is a joint venture of Solvay (75%) and BASF (25%) and is a leader on the PVDC market worldwide and on the Vinyls market in Europe. Visit [Solvay Solexis](#), [Solvay Advanced Polymers](#), [Solvay Padanaplast](#) and the [PVDC website](#) for more information.