

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DECIDES TO INCREASE SHAREHOLDING IN BSCH

Turin, 22 February 2000 – The Executive Committee today decided to increase the shareholding of SANPAOLO IMI in the capital of Banco Santander Central Hispano in relation with BSCH's capital increase planned for the coming weeks.

The increase in the shareholding will raise the Group's stake – including that held through the subsidiary IMI International of Luxembourg – to 3% of the capital of BSCH. The total value of the SANPAOLO IMI investment in BSCH, approximately 2,500 billion lire, will therefore be substantially the same as that of BSCH in SANPAOLO IMI.

The transaction is in the context of reinforcing the relationships between the two Groups and in the expectation of greater business and operational collaboration.