

## **Solevo, a leading African distributor of specialty chemicals sold by Helios to DPI-led consortium**

### ***Acquisition will support growth of critical specialty chemical inputs portfolio and accelerate geographic expansion***

- Solevo is a leading specialty chemicals distribution platform operating across eight countries in West and Central Africa, delivering critical inputs to high GDP contributing sectors in life sciences and industrials
- Africa is one of the fastest growing markets for chemicals globally, driven by secular trends towards urbanisation, industrialisation and a fast-growing, emerging middle class
- Solevo is an ethical business with strong governance principles and has a successful history of establishing long-term partnerships
- Helios Investment Partners exits following significant transformation of the company creating a pan African champion, driving the institutionalisation of the business, and positioning it for continued growth
- DPI will accelerate Solevo's expansion to scale into new geographies, with an expanding portfolio of specialty chemicals across key sectors

**London, 19 April 2023** - Solevo Group ("Solevo"), a leading African distribution platform for specialty chemicals, today announced its acquisition by Development Partners International ("DPI"), an investment firm focused on Africa, alongside minority co-investors South Suez and European development finance institution, DEG. The group of investors, led by DPI, are acquiring 100% of the business from Africa-focused investment firm, Helios Investment Partners ("Helios"). All regulatory approvals for the transaction have been approved and the deal closed on 18 April 2023.

Helios, alongside global investor Temasek, acquired Solevo in 2017 through the corporate carveout of Louis Dreyfus Company's ("LDC") African Inputs business, a leading global commodities merchant. Underpinned by over 75 years of heritage and brand recognition in Africa, Solevo has established itself as a key enabler in the continent's drive for agricultural self-sufficiency and the stimulation of local industry. With 23 distribution sites, a deep network across eight countries, and a team of market-leading experts, Solevo is recognised as a trusted distribution partner for customers across the continent. Since founding and under Helios' ownership, the company has transformed into a leading distributor of specialty chemicals across the most important life sciences and industrial segments.

Solevo offers a unique one-stop-shop for a range of inputs and chemicals including agriculture, also providing support for over one million small holder farmers, helping them to secure their livelihoods through increased yields and greater crop security, resulting in improved food security and climate resilience across Africa. Other life sciences segments include food and beverages, home and personal care, and industrial segments such as water treatment, mining and energy, construction, and packaging: all critical areas responsible for driving Africa's economic growth.

Africa's specialty chemicals market is rapidly growing, driven by secular trends towards urbanisation, industrialisation, a fast-growing, emerging middle class, as well as rapid population growth. These trends are accelerating the demand for specialty chemical products in key life

sciences and industrial sectors across the continent, reflected in the 5-15% year-on-year growth seen in Solevo's key segments. Working with new partners, DPI, Solevo will focus on continuing to deliver on its ambitious growth strategies of product and market expansion, in addition to digitalising its supply-chains, to consolidate its position as Africa's "partner of choice" and leading distributor of critical specialty chemical products.

**Joris Coppys, Chief Executive Officer of Solevo said:** *"With Solevo firmly established as a leader in its markets, we are incredibly well placed for the next stage of our evolution: to become the go-to distributor of specialty chemicals in Africa, serving critical sectors across the life sciences and industrial segments. By accelerating our digitalisation efforts and focusing on reaching new markets, we will empower more businesses, farmers, and communities across the continent. The partnership with Helios has been highly successful and fruitful, with significant investments in people, operations, and processes. Solevo has benefited from Helios' expertise in successfully executing large corporate carveouts and driving growth through commercial excellence. With the support of DPI, who bring a hands-on, partnership approach, entrepreneurial spirit, and deep market expertise, we have a unique opportunity to build on the achievements of the last five years under Helios' ownership, broadening our ability to serve our customers and communities, and building the foundations for food-security across the African continent."*

**Nimit Shah, Partner at Helios Investment Partners commented:** *"During our ownership, Helios is proud to have worked with Solevo to execute a value creation strategy that resulted in strong financial, social, and environmental performance. It consistently achieved double digit annual operating profit growth rates driven by revenue growth and margin expansion. The successful sale of Solevo underscores Helios' investment strategy of acquiring and building market-leading, diversified platform companies operating in the core economic sectors of key African countries, with an emphasis on portfolio operations as a creator of value. We look forward to following Solevo's continued success."*

**Babacar Ka, Partner at Development Partners International said:** *"The delivery of specialty chemicals to SMEs and large businesses across Africa is a key component of unlocking the continent's potential by supporting the growth of key life sciences and industrial sectors. Under Joris and his leadership teams' effective stewardship, Solevo has firmly established itself as a pan-African distribution leader, championing companies and local industries across the continent, including local farming communities, equipping them with new technology and the hands-on support they need to scale their businesses. We are excited to work with Joris and his experienced management team, to accelerate the business' transformation, as it scales into new markets across the continent."*

Helios was advised by Akin Gump as legal counsel, Rabobank and Rothschild acting as financial advisors and KPMG providing financial due diligence. DPI was advised by Norton Rose Fulbright as legal counsel, BNP Paribas as financial advisors, PWC acting as financial due diligence and DLA Piper providing legal due diligence advice.

**ENDS**

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### **About Solevo Group**

Solevo is a leading African specialty chemical distributor established in 1918 and acquired by Helios Investment Partners and Temasek in 2017 from Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC). Solevo has a deep heritage with over 100 years in operations and has gained brand value through its La Cigogne brand, standing for reliability and quality.

The Group is locally present in eight countries and is the leading distributor of specialty chemicals that operates across the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Angola, Ghana and Madagascar.

Solevo distributes a wide range of chemicals in various life sciences and industrial segments varying from agricultural over food production, home and personal care, to construction and water treatment.

### **About Helios Investment Partners**

Established in 2004, Helios Investment Partners is among the largest Africa-focused private investment firms, with a record that spans creating start-ups to providing expanding companies with growth capital and expertise. The firm has over \$3.0 billion in assets under management and is led and managed by a predominantly African team based in London, Paris, Lagos and Nairobi, with the language skills and cultural affinity to engage with local entrepreneurs, managers and intermediaries on the continent.

Helios leverages its local and global networks to create attractive proprietary investment opportunities, with an emphasis on building market leaders in core economic sectors and driving performance through a highly engaged approach to portfolio operations. The firm's unique combination of a deep knowledge of the African operating environment, a singular commitment to the region and a proven capability to manage complexity, is reflected in its diverse portfolio of growing, market-leading businesses and its position as a partner of choice in Africa.

Helios is the second mainstream private equity firm globally, and the largest emerging markets focused private equity firm, to achieve B Corp certification. B Corp status recognizes the firm's long-standing commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices.

### **About DPI**

DPI is an Africa focused private investment firm with over US\$3 billion in assets under management and co-investments across three funds, targeting high growth, impact-driven, and innovation-led companies. DPI's three funds, African Development Partners I, II and III (ADP I, II and III), are ranked in the top quartile for performance by Cambridge Associates. Since DPI was founded in 2007, its ADP funds have completed 28 investments in 25 companies across the continent and its portfolio companies employ over 60,000 staff, with over 25,000 jobs created during DPI's investment.

In 2020, ADP III became the first 2X Flagship Fund, as part of the global 2X Challenge, committing to integrate a gender lens into its investment process, and reflecting DPI's long-standing commitment to gender equity. DPI has a female co-founder and CEO, one-third of the partners are women, and 50% of the firm are women. As a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and the Operating Principles for Impact Management, DPI promotes high ESG and Impact standards and seeks to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.