

# COUNTRY GUIDE – Republic of Singapore<sup>1</sup>

(20 December 2013, last updated in January 2022)

**Important notes:** *This guide does not override the Rules and is not a substitute for legal, regulatory, tax, financial or any other advice from qualified professional advisers. If there is any conflict or inconsistency between this guide and the Rules, the Rules prevail. You may consult the Listing Division on a confidential basis for an interpretation of the Rules, or this guide.*

*The information contained in this guide on foreign laws, regulations and market practices is based on that provided to us by potential listing applicants, listing applicants, listed issuers or their respective advisers or officials from the relevant jurisdiction. We have not separately verified this information nor have we updated this information since its receipt.*

## **Subsequent Development (Updated in January 2022)**

*In November 2021, the Exchange introduced a new listing regime for overseas issuers which covers, among other things, that all issuers are required to comply with the core shareholder protection standards under the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules (where applicable) (the “**Core Shareholder Protection Standards**”). The amended Listing Rules are effective as from 1 January 2022. Information in this country guide may be outdated upon the introduction of such listing regime. Issuers and their advisers are advised to exercise caution when reading the guidance in this country guide.*

*A new applicant that is incorporated in the jurisdiction of this country guide should refer to the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules (where applicable) for the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards required by the Exchange<sup>2</sup>. Should there be any changes in the laws, regulations and market practices described in this country guide which might or would adversely affect a new applicant’s compliance with the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards or any applicable Listing Rules, such new applicant should inform the Exchange of any such changes. A new applicant is also encouraged to consult the Exchange at the earliest opportunity if there is any enquiry on the guidance or requirements in this country guide.*

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<sup>1</sup> Previously listed issuers incorporated in the Republic of Singapore include Midas Holdings Ltd. (Delisted in February 2020; Old Stock Code: 01021), CapitaMalls Asia Limited (Delisted in July 2014; Old Stock Code: 06813), Xinghua Port Holdings Ltd. (Delisted in November 2020; Old Stock Code: 01990), Elec & Eltek International Company Limited (Delisted in September 2020; Old Stock Code: 01151), Sound Global Ltd. (Delisted in September 2022; Old Stock Code: 00967), Yorkshire Holdings Ltd. (formerly Novo Group Ltd.) (Delisted in December 2019; Old Stock Code: 01048) and Centurion Corporation Limited (Delisted in November 2023; Old Stock Code: 6090).

<sup>2</sup> Including codification with modification of certain requirements under the Joint Policy Statement regarding the Listing of Overseas Companies, which are superseded and no longer effective as from 1 January 2022.

## Purpose of this Guide

This guide is one of a series that gives guidance on our treatment of listing applications from overseas issuers incorporated in a particular jurisdiction. The aim of this guide is to enhance applicants' understanding of our expectations, practices, procedures and the criteria we consider when applying the Rules for overseas issuers.

**This guide should be read in conjunction with the Listing Rules, in particular, the Core Shareholder Protection Standards, Chapter 19 of the Main Board Rules (Chapter 24 of the GEM Rules) (for primary listing applicants) and Chapter 19C of the Main Board Rules (for secondary listing applicants). All issuers incorporated in Singapore can apply for one or more “common waivers”<sup>3</sup> and those with, or seeking, a secondary listing do not need to apply for waivers of certain Rules which are automatically waived for them<sup>4</sup>(Updated in January 2022).**

### Summary of our Approach

Singapore must demonstrate how Singapore law and regulations and their constitutional documents, in combination, provide the Core Shareholder Protection Standards (Updated in January 2022).

The statutory securities regulator in Singapore, namely the Monetary Authority of Singapore, is a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU<sup>5</sup> and Singapore meets our international regulatory co-operation requirements because it already has adequate measures in place with Hong Kong's Securities and Futures Commission (Updated in January 2022).

We are prepared to accept financial statements that conform to Singapore Financial Reporting Standards from issuers with, or seeking, a primary listing in the same jurisdiction as the standard setter that have, or are seeking, a dual primary or secondary listing on the Exchange. These issuers must include a reconciliation statement of the financial effect setting out the material differences (if any) from either Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards or International Financial Reporting Standards in its accountants' report and financial statements (Updated in January 2022).

We expect a Singapore incorporated issuer to prominently and fully disclose in its listing document details of the Singapore taxation regime and how it is applicable to Hong Kong shareholders, including tax on gains from sales of securities.

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<sup>3</sup> Primary listing: Main Board Rule 19.58 (GEM Rule 24.25); Secondary listing: Main Board Rule 19C.11B

<sup>4</sup> Main Board Rule 19C.11

<sup>5</sup> International Organisation of Securities Commission's Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Consultation and Cooperation and the Exchange of Information.

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Singapore's equivalent to the Hong Kong Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) and the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32) is the Singapore Companies Act, which sets requirements for Singapore incorporated companies. The Monetary Authority of Singapore ("MAS") is the statutory securities regulator in Singapore (*Updated in April 2014*).

## **2. Application of this Country Guide**

- 2.1 This Country Guide applies to primary and secondary Main Board listing applicants and primary GEM listing applicants incorporated in Singapore. We do not accept applications for secondary listing on GEM.

## **3. International Regulatory Co-operation Measures**

- 3.1 Main Board Rule 8.02A states that each of the statutory securities regulator of an issuer's jurisdiction of incorporation and the statutory securities regulator of the place of central management and control must be a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU. This is to enable the Securities and Futures Commission (the "SFC") to seek regulatory assistance and information from overseas statutory securities regulators to facilitate the SFC's investigations and enforcement actions where an issuer has its records, business operations, assets and management outside Hong Kong. This requirement is met for issuers incorporated in Singapore as the MAS is a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU. In addition, in 1997, the MAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the SFC to promote mutual assistance by the exchange of information with respect to listed or traded securities on the respective exchanges (*Updated in January 2022*).
- 3.2 If a listing applicant is incorporated in Singapore but its place of central management and control<sup>6</sup> is elsewhere, the statutory securities regulator of that jurisdiction must also be a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU (*Updated in January 2022*).

## **4. Core Shareholder Protection Standards**

- 4.1 Singapore incorporated issuers must demonstrate how the domestic laws, rules and regulations to which they are subject and their constitutional documents, in combination, provide the Core Shareholder Protection Standards.

Based on submissions by a potential applicant, we have set out below details of the differences between the practices in Singapore and the then requirements in the Joint Policy Statement of the Listing of Overseas Companies (the "JPS")(repealed as of 1 January 2022). Where we have in the past accepted a

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<sup>6</sup> Main Board Rule 8.02A

practice and it is still relevant for assessment under the new listing regime for overseas issuers, we have stated this below. Singapore incorporated applicants should amend their constitutional documents to address the shortfall in compliance with the Core Shareholder Protection Standards (*Updated in January 2022*).

The information contained in this guide on Singaporean laws, regulations and market practices is based on submissions by a potential applicant. We have neither separately verified this information nor have we updated this information since its receipt. Issuers and their advisers are advised to exercise caution when reading the guidance in this country guide. Should there be any changes in the laws, regulations and market practices described in this country guide which might or would adversely affect a new applicant's compliance with the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards or any applicable Listing Rules, such new applicant should inform the Exchange of any such changes. (*Added in January 2022*)

#### *Proceedings at general meetings*

- 4.2 Notice of general meetings: Under the then JPS, an overseas company must give its members reasonable written notice of general meetings. Under Singapore laws, the notice period for convening a general meeting or class meeting, other than one for the passing of a special resolution<sup>7</sup>, is not less than 14 days and one that requires a special resolution is 21 days (*Updated in January 2022*).

The Exchange has previously accepted the notice requirement for convening general meetings under Singapore laws.

#### *Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022*

The requirement comparable to the then JPS requirement was codified with modification in paragraph 14(2) of the revised Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules as a Core Shareholder Protection Standard. Singapore incorporated applicants must demonstrate how they will comply with this requirement, which may necessitate an amendment to their constitutional documents (*Added in January 2022*).

- 4.3 Right to speak and vote at general meetings: The then JPS requires that all members must have the right to speak and vote at a general meeting, except in cases where members have a material interest in a transaction or arrangement, in which case they are required, by the Rules, to abstain from voting to approve the transaction or arrangement. Singapore incorporated listing applicants must

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<sup>7</sup> A resolution requiring to be passed by no less than three-quarters majority vote at a general meeting.

demonstrate how they will comply with this requirement, which may necessitate an amendment to their constitutional documents (*Updated in January 2022*).

#### *Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022*

The requirement comparable to the then JPS requirement was codified in paragraphs 14(3) and 14(4) of the revised Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules. Singapore incorporated applicants must demonstrate how they will comply with this requirement, which may necessitate an amendment to their constitutional documents (*Added in January 2022*).

### ***Other Core Shareholder Protection Standards***

- 4.4 Compared to the then JPS and the previous Appendix 3<sup>8</sup> to the Listing Rules, two new shareholder protection standards, namely, members' right to appoint proxies and corporate representatives<sup>9</sup> and inspect Hong Kong Branch Register<sup>10</sup> are added to require the applicants to demonstrate conformity. Applicants incorporated in Singapore might not meet these two new Core Shareholder Protection Standards and may have to amend their constitutional documents accordingly. Issuers and their advisors should refer to the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules for the complete set of Core Shareholder Protection Standards (*Added in January 2022*).

## **5. Practical and Operational Matters**

- 5.1 Reference is made to the Guidance for Overseas Issuers (HKEX-GL111-22) which contains guidance on an overseas issuer's ability to comply with Hong Kong's rules and regulations; the eligibility of securities; cross-border clearing and settlement; Hong Kong depositary receipts; taxation; and stock name identifications. Applicants are encouraged to notify the Listing Division if they envisage difficulties in complying with such matters, where applicable (*Updated in January 2022*).

## **6. Constitutional Documents**

- 6.1 Applicants should contact Listing Division if Singapore laws, rules and regulations and the applicants' constitutional documents do not provide the Core Shareholder Protection Standards (*Updated in January 2022*).

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<sup>8</sup> The previous version of Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules that was in effective on or prior to 31 December 2021

<sup>9</sup> Appendix 3, paragraph 18

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 3, paragraph 20

## 7. Accounting and Auditing Related Requirements

- 7.1 We normally require the accountants' reports and financial statements of overseas issuers seeking a primary or secondary listing on the Exchange to conform to the Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards ("HKFRS") or the International Financial Reporting Standards ("IFRS")<sup>11</sup> (*Updated in January 2022*).

### Our Approach

- 7.2 We are prepared to accept financial statements that conform to Singapore Financial Reporting Standards ("SFRS")<sup>12</sup> and Singapore Standards on Auditing<sup>13</sup>. We are prepared to consider allowing a Singapore incorporated issuer with, or seeking, a primary listing in the same jurisdiction as the standard setter that have, or are seeking, a dual primary or a secondary listing on the Exchange to use SFRS for their accountants' reports and all subsequent financial statements, and for these to be audited to Singapore Standards on Auditing. However, this is on the condition that the issuer includes a reconciliation statement of the financial effect setting out the material differences (if any) from either HKFRS or IFRS, in its accountants' reports and subsequent financial statements<sup>14</sup> (*Updated in January 2022*).

## 8. Taxation

- 8.1 Singapore laws do not impose tax on capital gains. However, gains arising from the disposal of ordinary shares of a Singapore incorporated company may be construed to be of an income nature and subject to Singapore tax if the gains arise from activities which the Controller of Income Tax of Singapore considers as the carrying on of a trade or business in Singapore.

### Our Approach

- 8.4 We expect a Singapore incorporated issuer to disclose the following prominently in its listing document:
- (a) the rate of tax investors in its securities will have to pay;

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<sup>11</sup> Main Board Rules 4.11 to 4.13, 19.13, 19.25A, 19C.10D, 19C.23 and Note 2.1 to paragraph 2 of Appendix 16 (GEM Rules 7.12, 18.04 and 24.18A).

<sup>12</sup> A list of alternative overseas financial reporting standards that are considered comparable to HKFRS and IFRS is published on the Exchange's website, as amended from time to time.

<sup>13</sup> A list of alternative overseas auditing standards that are considered comparable to the standards required by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants or by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board of the International Federation of Accountants is published on the Exchange's website, as amended from time to time.

<sup>14</sup> Primary listing: Main Board Rule 19.14 and GEM Rule 7.14 (accountants' reports) and Main Board Rule 19.25A and GEM Rule 24.18A (annual/ interim/ quarterly financial statements). Secondary listing: Main Board Rules 19C.10D (accountants' reports) and 19C.23 (annual/ interim financial statements).

- (b) details of any treaty between Singapore and Hong Kong that may affect the tax payable;
  - (c) the effect of holding the issuer's shares through CCASS or outside CCASS on any tax payable (where applicable); and
  - (d) the procedures for claiming any tax relief or exemptions.
- 8.5 We expect appropriate disclosure of taxation in at least the "Summary" and "Risk Factors" sections of the issuer's listing document and any sections summarising Singapore laws and regulations.