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Refinitiv Benchmark Services (UK) Limited

Statement relating to the IOSCO Principles for the WMR Financial Benchmarks



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Refinitiv Benchmark Services (UK) Limited (“RBSL”) is issuing this statement in relation to the IOSCO Principles for Financial Benchmarks (the “Principles”), which require financial benchmark administrators to certify publicly the extent to which they have implemented the Principles. The Principles envisage that implementation may be proportionate to the size and risks posed by each benchmark, administrator and the relevant benchmark setting process.

RBSL continues to be broadly aligned with the Principles and, in doing so, has taken a proportionate approach where it believes this to be justified in the circumstances. This document summarises the controls, policies, procedures and governance arrangements that RBSL has in place, that demonstrate compatibility with the Principles.

Please note that this statement is RBSL’s own internal assessment of the Principles and not the assessment undertaken by IOSCO that is referred to in the Financial Stability Board (the “FSB”) Foreign Exchange Benchmarks Consultative Document published on 15 July 2014.

Principle 1: Overall responsibility of the administrator

RBSL is the administrator of the WMR spot, forward and non-deliverable foreign exchange benchmark rates (collectively, the “Benchmarks” and each a “Benchmark”). As the administrator of the Benchmarks, RBSL has primary responsibility for all aspects of the Benchmark determination process, including the development, determination, and distribution of the Benchmark, ensuring appropriate transparency and establishing credible and transparent governance, oversight, business continuity, and accountability procedures. This is stated in RBSL’s publicly available methodology document (the “Methodology”), which is available on its website at <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

FTSE Russell has established a Benchmark Oversight Committee (the “Oversight Committee”) to perform oversight over the Benchmarks and RBSL in its role as Benchmark administrator. Please see Principle 5 below for further information on the Oversight Committee.

RBSL has internal controls in place that are designed to provide for timely distribution of the Benchmarks. As specified in the Methodology, RBSL aims to publish each Benchmark within 15 minutes of the fix time for that Benchmark.

Principle 2: Oversight of third parties

RBSL outsources most services involved in the provision of the benchmark family to entities within the wider London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG). However, input data, including trade, order, and quote data, is provided by certain third-party platform operators (specifically, EBS, and, in certain limited circumstances, Currenex, Inc. (“Currenex”)) pursuant to licensing agreements.

RBSL has written agreements setting out the roles and obligations of each platform operator. RBSL also monitors compliance with these agreements and conducts due diligence on each of its platform operators in accordance with its Due Diligence Policy.

RBSL maintains an Outsourcing Framework to manage services outsourced LSEG entities, which includes an Outsourcing Policy, Service Level Agreement, and Outsourcing Register. All activities are managed through SLA together with specified KPIs. Performance against these KPIs is monitored with regular reporting to the RBSL Board.

Principle 3: Conflicts of interest for administrators

RBSL has also implemented its own Conflicts of Interest Procedures which sets out how RBSL identifies, discloses, manages, mitigates and avoids actual or potential conflicts of interest. These procedures are tailored to RBSL’s role as administrator of the Benchmarks. RBSL has also prepared a Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Document. That document describes actual or potential conflicts of interest that may arise in connection with the offering of the Benchmarks.

Principle 4: Control framework for administrators

RBSL has a control framework, which includes:

- a. An Oversight Committee with responsibility for oversight of the Benchmarks and RBSL's role as administrator of the Benchmarks. Please see Principle 5 for more information;
- b. The Methodology, which sets out, amongst other things, the parameters for any exercise of judgement by FTSE employees;
- c. The Conflicts of Interest Procedures sets out RBSL's processes for identifying, managing, mitigating and avoiding conflicts of interest;
- d. A Due Diligence Policy, which sets out RBSL's processes for conducting due diligence on the third party platform operators from which RBSL sources data;
- e. A Price Challenge and Complaints Handling Policy, which sets out RBSL's processes for handling price challenges and complaints;
- f. An Operational Risk Framework, which sets out how operational risks are identified, managed and monitored;
- g. A Controls Matrix which lists the material controls performed for each Benchmark on a daily, weekly, monthly and ad hoc basis;
- h. A Standard of Conduct, which contains minimum standards that apply to all RBSL entities, including in relation to conflicts of interest;
- i. A whistle blowing policy;
- j. A training programme for FTSE employees, including RBSL specific training to ensure that employees have sufficient Benchmark related expertise and corporate training on AML, Ethics and BCP; and
- k. Regular reviews by LSEG Internal Audit function and Independent Third-Party Auditors, including on-site audits.

RBSL does not provide contribution input data, and as such does not have any Submitters. It has not implemented the measures set out in Principle 4 that relate to Submitters.

Principle 5: Internal oversight

RBSL has established an Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee Terms of Reference, which lists the responsibilities of the Oversight Committee and its current members, is available here: <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

The Oversight Committee comprises members selected on the basis of their experience, knowledge and independence from the day to day management of the Benchmarks. The Oversight Committee Terms of Reference permits the Oversight Committee to appoint internal or external technical advisers as appropriate.

Members of the Oversight Committee are appointed by RBSL. As the Benchmark does not have Submitters, the Oversight Committee's role does not encompass the Submitter specific provisions of Principle 5.

Principle 6: Benchmark design

The Methodology describes the key features of the Benchmark design, including how it seeks to achieve an accurate and reliable representation of the interest it seeks to measure and eliminate factors that might result in a distortion of the price, rate, index or value of the Benchmark.

On the basis of publicly available volume data produced by the LSEG FX Matching System and EBS, RBSL has determined that the LSEG FX Matching System and EBS are currently the trading platforms with sufficient liquidity for the currencies for which RBSL uses their data. To determine whether this remains the case, RBSL internal currency review group conducts regular (as a minimum, annual) reviews of the data sources.

RBSL also conducts a due diligence process with each of its third-party data providers, which includes discussions on their controls, processes and procedures to address any potential unethical trading behaviour.

Principle 7: Data sufficiency

The trade currency Benchmarks are calculated primarily by reference to trades executed by parties on an arm's length basis. RBSL's validation process requires a minimum number of observable transactions to be captured before they may be used as data in the calculation of the Benchmarks. RBSL also captures order information for use in the event that insufficient observable transactions are captured. RBSL does not rely on a solicitation process and the parties using the platforms do not provide the data to RBSL specifically for the purpose of influencing the benchmark determination. Instead, they use these platforms in their ordinary course of business. For non-trade currencies, RBSL sources indicative quote rates. Please refer to the Methodology for more information on how the Benchmark is calculated for both trade currencies and non-trade currencies.

As stated in the Methodology, RBSL recognises that to enable the publication of a meaningful Benchmark, a market in each currency pair represented by that Benchmark must genuinely exist and that market must be active.

However, the economic realities of each applicable currency market will dictate the relative meaning of what "active" means as market liquidity varies greatly from a major liquid (e.g. trade) currency to an extremely illiquid (e.g. quote) exotic currency and may also vary depending on the time of day. Accordingly, RBSL, in certain limited circumstances, defines an active market as one with a single source, although this situation is generally limited to quote currencies. As stated in the Methodology, RBSL can provide a list of these currencies to its subscribers on request.

Principle 8: Hierarchy of data inputs.

The Methodology describes the order of hierarchy that is applied for alternative data sources and the parameters for the exercise of any judgement by FTSE personnel.

Please refer to sections 2.3, 2.4, 3.3, 3.4, 4.3 and 4.4 of the Methodology for more information.

Principle 9: Transparency of benchmark determinations

As RBSL currently offers 157 spot fix Benchmarks which it sets either half hourly (trade currency Benchmarks) or hourly (non-trade currency Benchmarks) between the hours of 6am Hong Kong time on Monday to 10pm UK time on Friday, it is not operationally possible for RBSL to publish a description of the Benchmark calculation with each Benchmark. Instead, WMR Methodology provides, in RBSL's view, sufficient information on active markets, economic realities, data types and the parameters for any judgement-based decisions to be made by LSEG employees, to facilitate an understanding of how the Benchmarks are determined. In addition, if it is necessary for RBSL to use "quote" data instead of trade rates for the trade currencies, RBSL, as standard practice, communicates this to clients via email to inform them. The fact that RBSL may be required to use quote rates in the absence of trade rates is also highlighted upfront in the Methodology. RBSL is also happy to respond to any questions that its subscribers raise on a particular Benchmark.

Principle 10: Periodic review

RBSL has procedures in place to review the applicable market factors (including market conditions and structural changes) relating to each Benchmark to ascertain whether it would be appropriate to make any changes to the Methodology. Any potential changes are reviewed by the Oversight Committee. If the proposed change is material, the Oversight Committee makes a recommendation to the Board, with final approval vesting in the Board. If any changes are proposed that may have a material impact on subscribers, they are communicated to subscribers, together with the underlying rationale, in advance.

These reviews include consideration of whether certain underlying conditions in the formulation of the Benchmark remain appropriate and, in certain circumstances, may lead to the cessation of a particular Benchmark. RBSL has implemented a Cessation of Rates Policy which sets out the circumstances in which any such cessation may arise and its applicable processes. A copy is available here: <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

Principle 11: Content of the methodology

WMR Methodology is publicly available on FTSE website at <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>. RBSL conducts periodic reviews of its Methodology and in accordance with the Principles, focuses on providing transparency for its Benchmark subscribers. Accordingly, RBSL's view is that the Methodology document published on its website contains sufficient detail to allow subscribers to understand how the Benchmarks are derived and to assess their representativeness, its relevance to stakeholders and its appropriateness as a reference.

As RBSL does not have any Submitters, its Methodology does not include criteria for including and excluding Submitters.

Principle 12: Changes to the methodology

RBSL has a formal process for making changes to its Methodology. The Oversight Committee has responsibility for reviewing and overseeing any proposed material changes. If the Oversight Committee believes as a result of any such review that material changes are required, it will then make a recommendation to the Board, with final approval vesting with the Board. This process is set out in the Oversight Committee Terms of Reference, a copy of which is available here: <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

If, following a review by the Oversight Committee and approval by the RBSL Board, a material change is made to the Methodology, RBSL would publish the new Methodology document to its website at <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>. In these circumstances, RBSL endeavours to consult with stakeholders and to provide them with advance notice of any proposed changes as set out in its Changes to the Methodology Policy.

Principle 13: Transition

RBSL has implemented a Cessation of Rates Policy, which is available here: <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

RBSL highlights to its subscribers and users in the Methodology that they should plan for possible changes to the Benchmarks or the cessation of a particular Benchmark and that they should ensure that any financial contracts, financial instruments or funds that reference a Benchmark contain robust written fallback plans and other contingency provisions in the event of material changes to or cessation of that Benchmark.

Principle 14: Submitter code of conduct

This Principle does not apply to RBSL as RBSL does not have any Submitters.

Principle 15: Internal controls over data collection

As stated above, RBSL sources trade, order and quote data from certain third-party platform operators. RBSL has licensing agreements in place with each platform operator and conducts due diligence on each platform operator. To formalise this process, RBSL has established a Due Diligence Policy.

RBSL has technology based internal controls over its data collection, validation and transmission processes. RBSL has implemented access controls to limit access to the FTSE applications and captured data to FTSE authorised personnel. To help ensure data integrity, RBSL sources corroborating trade and order data from multiple platform operators in respect of certain trade currency pairs.

Principle 16: Complaints procedures

RBSL has implemented and published a Price Challenge and Complaints Handling Policy, which sets out its procedures for handling price challenges and complaints. A copy of the policy is available here: <https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/benchmarks>.

Principle 17: Audits

Regular reviews by LSEG Internal Audit function and Independent Third-Party Auditors, including on-site audits.

Principle 18: Audit trail

RBSL retains and records all relevant data associated with the calculation of the Benchmarks, including input data collected from platform operators; methodologies and models, exercise of expert judgement; deviations from standard procedures; identity of each person involved in the determination and any queries and responses to data input or published Benchmarks. RBSL maintains a Record Keeping policy, and retains such records for 5 years.

Principle 19: Cooperation with regulatory authorities

RBSL deals with its regulators in an open and cooperative way and discloses to them appropriately anything relating to RBSL of which they would reasonably expect notice of. In addition, RBSL remains committed to working with relevant regulators as appropriate and has worked extensively on Global Benchmark Reform, Regulation, and Industry Best Practice, including the IOSCO Principles.

Should you have any questions on this statement, please address them to wmr.sales@lseg.com.

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For over 35 years we have been at the forefront of driving change for the investor, always innovating to shape the next generation of benchmarks and investment solutions that open up new opportunities for the global investment community.

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