

On behalf of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, I would like to welcome you to our roundtable on corporate governance.

For those I did not have the pleasure of meeting at dinner last night, I am Michael Izza, the Institute's chief executive.

Thank you all for joining us at our London roundtable on corporate governance. Our first roundtable was held in December 2005 in Washington. Both roundtables form part of the Institute's *'Beyond the myth of Anglo-American corporate governance'* initiative. This aims to generate discussion on differences between US and UK corporate governance systems.

The purpose of the initiative is to promote understanding of pressures and opportunities in international capital markets, rather than to make specific policy recommendations.

By convening interested parties from both sides of the Atlantic we hope to share experience, to exchange ideas and highlight the successes of both the US and UK systems and the challenges they face.

We have today, a comprehensive range of expert speakers and participants from the business, investment, academic, regulatory and accounting communities.

This includes speakers from the SEC, the PCAOB, the FASB, the Business Roundtable, the FRC, CBI, and ICGN. In addition, a number of individual investors and business leaders will be joining the panel discussions.

I would also like to thank the Department for Trade and Industry and in particular, The Rt Honourable Alistair Darling MP, the Secretary of State who will be making a keynote address before our lunch break.

The crucial role of the accountancy profession in corporate governance is clear. Through reporting and auditing, chartered accountants support the flow of reliable information between those who are responsible for the direction, control and oversight of companies.

The ICAEW has a long history of influencing the development of company law, financial reporting and auditing. Through technical staff and volunteers we actively contribute to policy development.

Over the past 9 years we have contributed to the development of what is now the 2006 Companies Act. Over the past 4 years we have contributed to congressional SEC and PCAOB proposals relating to the requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

In addition, we actively participate at the European level, making contributions to the European Commission, Council and Parliament and with FEE, the European Federation of Accountants.

The ICAEW has been one of the leading players in corporate governance reform since 1991 when we helped to establish the Cadbury Committee which produced the seminal Combined Code of 1992.

In 1999, we produced the Turnbull guidance on internal control, one of the three frameworks referred to by the SEC in its rules on Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

And we have continued to support UK corporate governance developments since then. For example, in 2004 and 5, we provided staff support to the review of the Turnbull guidance by the UK Financial Reporting Council.

We have done this not only because it is in our public interest remit, but also because it reflects what our members do.

80% of the UK's top 350 listed companies have at least one of our members on the board as finance director, CEO, chairman or non-executive director.

Our theme today - Beyond the myth of Anglo-American corporate governance – is highly topical. Indeed, since the launch of our initiative in June 2005, two high level groups have been established in the US to consider capital market regulation and competitiveness.

You will find in front of you a conference programme and also a paper called 'Emerging Issues'. This reflects the results of the 'Pressure Points' consultation we launched just over 12 months ago in Washington. Today's discussion will focus on our findings.

We are keen to learn from our speakers and also very much want to hear your views. I would like to thank you all in advance for your contributions and thank you once again for joining us here today, particularly friends who have crossed the Atlantic.

At this point I would like to introduce you to Robert Hodgkinson the Institute's Executive Director responsible for the ICAEW's thought leadership initiatives.