

**Foreword from the Holcim photo book****Dr. Rolf Soiron, Chairman of the Board of Directors /  
Markus Akermann, Chief Executive Officer**

It's easy enough to say: "Holcim is one of the leading producers of cement, gravel and concrete in the world." But what does that really mean? The reality of Holcim is as multifaceted, as interdependent on its environment and as constantly changing as if it were itself a living being.

Today, the Holcim "organism" is made up of companies in over 70 countries. Day in and day out, its 80'000 employees carry out work which connects them not only with each other but – as is the case with all living things – also brings them into contact with other beings and their ways of life. Like other living beings, too, this gigantic "body" is guided by instructions and rules which are constantly being adjusted to changing internal and external conditions.

The confidence that this complex organism will continue to evolve is so large that investors of all stripes entrust significant financial resources to it. Currently, they finance over 150 cement plants and quarries, over 470 gravel works, more than 100 asphalt plants and some 1400 ready-mix concrete plants. Hard work, raw materials and energy are combined at these locations to make the basic materials which are essential to construction sites around the world. In 2011, this included some 150 million tonnes of cement, some 170 million tonnes of aggregates like gravel and sand, more than 45 million cubic meters of ready-mix concrete and 11 million tonnes of asphalt.

The work of this large organism, which supports the lives of its employees, their families and those with whom it does business, never stops. It is a place where people can put their professional skills to use and make something of their lives. It is a living being which gladly accepts its responsibilities for the life around it, be it the human community or nature in its biological and material forms. As an organism, it lives and grows: sometimes it retreats, more often than not it expands and evolves. It is also physically visible, often from a distance, as its equipment shapes the landscape. When it digs for raw materials, it leaves its traces in the ground. But when done, these places are returned to nature, providing new environments for other living beings. It leaves its traces in other areas as well. The functional necessities of an organization of this size, its rules and standards, its longstanding values and traditions, all shape how the 80'000 people who make up this organism interact with each other – and with that interaction the cycles through which it lives and grows.

When this large, living organism called Holcim celebrates its centennial in 2012, it will be like a mighty tree which has grown from a tiny seed: after 100 years, we can ask, what remains of its origins? Obviously, the family which founded the company is still around and still influential. But even the name of the company has changed, with "Holderbank" having become "Holcim". Nothing has been produced at the site of the first factory for a long time now. Many other plants, once bought or built, have also long been closed and their quarries returned to nature. At the same time, countless plants and activities have been added, some in countries which nobody would have thought of back when the company was founded – or which at the time did not even exist. Some products which might seem the same on the surface are today much different in their composition from what they were then. The processes by which they are made, and the rules which govern how, have changed as well – one thinks of worker safety, of measures to protect

the environment or to reduce energy consumption. Change has also come to the ways in which decisions are made at all levels of the organization, to the way people interact with each other, to notions of transparency with respect to investors.

And so the company is much like we are when we celebrate an important anniversary. We look back and ask: what was the common thread through all those years? Was there some invisible plan guiding our way? Can we uncover it? Will it perhaps provide us some clues as to what to expect in the years ahead? Just as with people, the company's answers are often more a reflection of what an individual finds personally important than an exhaustive representation of such a multifaceted reality.

As Chairman of the Board and CEO, we have been able to experience the power of the diversity of Holcim over many years. This has given us a lot personally, but it has also warned us off any attempt to try and define this company once and for all, to delve into every aspect of it or to try and describe it in depth. When it came to our centennial, we found instead that we were more inclined to capture the present moment. As this is a predominantly visual age, we have approached some of the world's best photographers – portraitist Marco Grob and the industrial photography duo David Hiepler/Fritz Brunier – to help us do so. We wanted to know how they, as outsiders – and not we as insiders – see the two things which (besides our loyal investors!) are most important to Holcim: its people and its equipment. While the images these talented photographers came up with may be provocative at times, they always speak of the self-confidence, pride, strength and presence of our company. Taken together they do not represent the reality of today's Holcim, but a set of specific realities, next to which there are of course countless others.

This book is a small token of thanks for all who feel connected to Holcim. It is meant as a gift for the 80'000 people and their families who make up the company today, and above all for the great majority who are not pictured here. To all we want to express our respect and our heartfelt thanks!