Risk Factors

You should carefully consider all the information in this annual report and in particular the risks and uncertainties outlined below. Any of the factors described below, or any other factors discussed elsewhere in this report, could have a material negative effect on our business, operational and after-tax results, financial position, cash flows, liquidity, credit rating, reputation and/or our share price. Furthermore, our operational results may have a greater variability than in the past and we may have difficulties in accurately predicting future developments. See also "Forward-looking Statements".

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Risk associated with the industry and market conditions

Current turmoil in the financial markets and macro-economic downturn may have an impact on our business.

The extent of the current financial market turmoil and the accompanying economic downturn may exacerbate some of the risk factors we are exposed to, although our customers currently have relatively strong financial results and positions. Traffic volumes are increasing and the networks well utilized compared to the industry downturn 2001–2003. The effects of a tighter credit market on consumer and operator spending may have several adverse effects, such as:

- reduced demand for products and services, resulting in increased price competition or deferment of purchases and orders by customers;
- risk of excess and obsolete inventories and excess manufacturing capacity and risk of financial difficulties or failures among suppliers;
- increased demand for customer finance, difficulties in collection of accounts receivable and increased risk of counterparty failures;
- decline in the value of the assets in the Company's pension plans;
- increased difficulties to forecast sales and financial results as well as increased volatility in our reported results.

We are subject to political, economic and regulatory risks in the various countries in which we operate.

We conduct business throughout the world and are subject to the effects of general global economic conditions as well as conditions unique to a specific country or region. We conduct business in more than 140 countries, with a significant proportion of our sales to emerging markets in Asia Pacific, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. We expect that sales to such emerging markets will be an increasing portion of total sales, as developing nations and regions around the world increase their investments in telecommunications. We already have extensive operations in many of these countries, which involve certain risks, including volatility in gross domestic product, civil disturbances, economic and political instability, nationalization of private assets and the imposition of exchange controls.

Changes in regulatory requirements, tariffs and other trade barriers, price or exchange controls or other governmental policies in the countries in which we conduct business could limit our operations and make the repatriation of profits difficult. In addition, the uncertainty of the legal environment in some regions could limit our ability to enforce our rights. We also must comply with the export control regulations of the countries in which we operate and trade embargoes in force at the time of sale. Although we seek to comply with all such regulations, even unintentional violations could have material adverse effects on our business, operational results and reputation.

We are subject to the market conditions affecting the capital and operating expenditures of our customers, making demand for our products and services highly unpredictable.

Adverse economic conditions could cause network operators to postpone investments or initiate other cost-cutting initiatives to improve their financial position, which could result in significantly reduced capital expenditures for network infrastructure. If operator spending for network equipment and associated rollout services declines substantially, our business and operating results would suffer. We have established flexibility to cost effectively accommodate to fluctuations in demand. However, if demand were to fall in the future, we may experience material adverse effects on our revenues and may even incur operating losses. If demand is significantly weaker or more volatile than expected, this may have a material adverse impact on the trading price of our shares.

Industry convergence between telecom, data and media represents opportunities but also risks.

We are affected by market conditions within the telecommunications industry. We are also affected by the convergence of the telecom-, data-, and media industries, which is largely driven by technological development related to IP-based communications. This change impacts our addressable market, competition, and our objective setting and strategies, as well as the need to consider risks to achieve our set objectives. Should we not succeed in understanding the market development or acquire the necessary competence or develop and market products and solutions that are competitive in this changing market, our future results will suffer.

Our business essentially depends upon the continued growth of mobile communications and the success of new types of services offered in broadband networks.

Most of our business depends on continued growth in mobile communications in terms of both number of subscriptions and usage per subscriber, which in turn requires the continued deployment of our network systems by customers. In particular, we are dependent on operators in highly penetrated markets to successfully introduce services that cause a substantial increase in usage for both voice and data. In emerging markets, we are, to a certain extent, dependent on the availability of lower-cost handsets in addition to affordable tariffs by operators to support a continued increase of mobile subscribers. If operators are not successful in their attempts to increase the number of subscribers and/or stimulate increased usage, our business and operational results could be materially adversely affected.

Fixed and mobile networks converge and new technologies, such as IP and broadband, enable operators to deliver a range of new types of services in both fixed and mobile networks. We are dependent upon the market acceptance of such services, e.g. IPTV, and on the outcome of regulatory and standardization activities in this field, such as spectrum allocation. If delays in standardization or market acceptance occur, this could adversely affect our business and operational results.

Changes in the regulatory environment for telecommunications systems and services could negatively impact our business.

Telecommunications is a regulated industry and regulatory changes affect both our customers' and our operations. For example, changes in regulations that impose more stringent, time-consuming or costly planning, zoning requirements or building approvals regarding the construction of radio base stations and other network infrastructure could adversely affect the timing and costs of new network construction or expansion and the commercial launch and ultimate commercial success of these networks. Similarly, tariff regulations that affect the pricing of services offered by operators could also affect their ability to invest in network infrastructure, which in turn could affect the sales of our systems and services. Radio frequency spectrum allocation between different types of usage may affect operator spending adversely or force us to develop new products to be able to compete in such market.

License fees, environmental, health and safety, privacy and other regulatory changes may increase costs and restrict operations of network operators and service providers. The indirect impact of such changes could affect our business adversely even though the specific regulations may not directly apply to our products or us.

Consolidation among network operators may increase our dependence on a limited number of key customers.

The market for mobile network equipment is highly concentrated, with the 10 largest operators representing more than 40 percent of the total market. Network operators have undergone significant consolidation, resulting also in a significant number of operators with activities in several countries. This trend is expected to continue, while also intra-country consolidation is likely to accelerate as a result of competitive pressure.

A market with fewer and larger operators will increase our reliance on key customers and, due to the increased size of these companies, may negatively impact our bargaining position and profit margins. Moreover, if the combined companies operate in the same geographic market, networks may be shared and less network equipment and associated services may be required. Another possible consequence of customer consolidation is that it could cause a delay in their network investments while they negotiate merger/acquisition agreements, secure necessary approvals, or are constrained by efforts to integrate the businesses. A recent development is also that network operators, without legal consolidation but through cooperation agreements, share parts of their network infrastructure, which may adversely affect demand for network equipment.

Consolidation among equipment and services suppliers may lead to increased competition and a different competitive landscape.

Industry consolidation among equipment suppliers could potentially result in stronger competitors that are competing as end-to-end suppliers as well as competitors more specialized in particular areas. Consolidation may also result in competitors with greater resources, including technical and engineering resources, than we have or reduce existing scale advantages for us. This could have a material adverse effect on our business, operating results, and financial condition.

We operate in a highly competitive industry, which is subject to competitive pricing and rapid technological change.

The markets for our products are highly competitive in terms of pricing, functionality and service quality, the timing of development and introduction of new products and services and terms of financing. We face intense competition from significant competitors, and Chinese companies in particular, have become relatively stronger in recent years. Our competitors may implement new technologies before we do, allowing them to offer more attractively priced or enhanced products, services or solutions, or may offer other incentives that we do not provide. Some of our competitors may have greater resources in certain business segments or geographic markets than we do. We may also encounter increased competition from new market entrants, alternative technologies or evolving industry standards. The rapid technological change also results in shorter life-cycles for products, increasing the risk in all product investments. Our operating results significantly depend on our ability to compete in this market environment, in particular on our ability to introduce new products to the market and to continuously enhance the functionality while reducing the cost of new and existing products, in order to cope with the continuous price erosion that is a result of the rapid technological change.

Our current and historical operations are subject to a wide range of environmental, health and safety regulations.

We are subject to certain environmental, health and safety laws and regulations that affect our operations, facilities and products in each of the jurisdictions in which we operate. We believe that we are in compliance with all material environmental, health and safety laws and regulations related to our products, operations and business activities. However, there is a risk that we may have to incur expenditures to cover environmental and health liabilities to maintain compliance with current or future environmental, health and safety laws and regulations or to undertake any necessary remediation. It is difficult to reasonably estimate the future impact of environmental matters, including potential liabilities due to a number of factors especially the lengthy time intervals often involved in resolving them.

Liability claims related to and public perception of the potential health risks associated with electromagnetic fields could negatively affect our business.

The mobile telecommunications industry is subject to claims that mobile handsets and other telecommunications devices that generate electromagnetic fields expose users to health risks. At present, a substantial number of scientific studies conducted by various independent research bodies have indicated that electromagnetic fields, at levels within the limits prescribed by public health authority safety standards and recommendations, cause no adverse effects to human health. However, any perceived risk or new scientific findings of adverse health effects of mobile communication devices and equipment could adversely affect us through a reduction in sales. Although Ericsson's products are designed to comply with all current safety standards and recommendations regarding electromagnetic fields, we cannot assure you that we or the jointly owned Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications will not become the subject of product liability claims or be held liable for such claims or be required to comply with future regulatory changes that may have an adverse effect on our business. See also "Legal and Tax proceedings" in the Board of Directors' Report.

Strategic and operational risks

Short-term volatility in business mix may have impact on sales and gross margins.

Our sales to network operators are a mix of equipment, software and services, which normally generate different gross margins.

Telecom network solutions are delivered in three different ways:

- as initial network buildouts, including equipment, software and network rollout services, and often also significant amounts of civil works and/or third-party products with lower gross margins than own products;
- as subsequent network expansions (added geographical coverage or increased capacity) and upgrades to higher functionality, where the deliverables include higher shares of software and less rollout services and therefore normally have higher margins; and
- as professional services, which have lower gross margins than equipment and software.

As a consequence, reported gross margin in a specific period will be affected by the overall mix of equipment, software and services as well as the relative content of third party products. Network expansions and upgrades have much shorter leadtimes for delivery than initial network buildouts. Such orders are normally placed with short notice by customers, i.e. less than a month, and consequently, variations in demand are difficult to forecast. As a result, changes in our product and service mix may affect our ability to forecast and may also impact our ability to detect in advance whether actual results will deviate from those forecasted.

Most of our business is derived from a limited number of customers.

We derive most of our business from large, multi-year network build-out agreements with a limited number of significant customers. Although no single customer currently represents more than 10 percent of sales, the loss of, or a reduced role with, a key customer for any reason could have a significant adverse impact on sales, profit and market share for an extended period.

Some long-term frame agreements expose us to risks related to agreed future price reductions or penalties.

Long-term agreements are typically awarded on a competitive bidding basis. In some cases, such agreements also include commitments to future price reductions. In order to maintain the gross margin even with such lower prices, we continuously strive to reduce the costs of our products. We reduce costs through design improvements and other changes to benefit from new technical development, resulting in for example reduced component prices and productivity in production. However, there can be no assurance that our actions to reduce costs will be sufficient or timely to maintain our gross margin in such contracts.

Frame agreements often also provide for penalties and termination rights in the event of our failure to deliver ordered products on time or if our products do not perform as promised, which may affect our results negatively.

We expend significant resources on product and technology R&D which may not be successful in the market.

Developing new products or updating existing products and solutions requires significant levels of financial and other commitments to research and development, which may not always result in success. We are also actively engaged in the development of technology standards that we are incorporating into our products and solutions. In order to be successful, those standards must be accepted by relevant standardization bodies and by the industry as a whole. Our sales and earnings may suffer if we invest in development of technologies and technology standards that do not function as expected, are not adopted in the industry or are not accepted in the marketplace within the timeframe we expect, or at all.

Please also see section “Research and Development” in the Board of Directors’ Report and in Information on the Company.

We make strategic acquisitions to get access to technology, competence or new markets.

In our industry, which requires huge investments in technology and at the same time is exposed to rapid technological and market changes, we make strategic investments in order to obtain various benefits, e.g. to reduce time-to-market, to gain access to technology and/or competence, to increase our scale or to broaden our product portfolio or expand our customer base. There are no guarantees that such acquisitions are successful or that we succeed in integrating the acquired entities to gain the expected benefits at all or in the timeframe we expect.

We enter into joint ventures, strategic alliances and third party agreements to offer complementary products and services.

If our partnering arrangements fail to perform as expected, whether as a result of having incorrectly assessed our needs or the capabilities of our strategic partners, our ability to work with these partners or otherwise, our ability to develop new products and solutions may be constrained and this may harm our competitive position in the market. Additionally, our share of any losses from, or commitments to contribute additional capital to, joint ventures has and may continue to adversely affect our financial position or results of operations.

Our solutions may also require us to license technologies from other companies and successfully integrate such technologies with our products. It may be necessary in the future to seek or renew licenses relating to various aspects of these products. There can be no assurance that the necessary licenses would be available on acceptable terms, or at all. Moreover, the inclusion in our products of software or other intellectual property licensed from third parties on a non-exclusive basis could limit our ability to protect our proprietary rights in our products.

Our products incorporate intellectual property rights (IPR) developed by us that may be difficult to protect or may be found to infringe on the rights of others.

While we have been issued a large number of patents and other patent applications are currently pending, there can be no assurance that any of these patents will not be challenged, invalidated, or circumvented, or that any rights granted under these patents will in fact provide competitive advantages to us.

In 2005, the European Union considered placing restrictions on the patentability of software. Although the European Union ultimately rejected this proposal, we cannot guarantee that they will not revisit this issue in the future. We rely on many software patents, and any limitations on the patentability of software may materially affect our business.

We utilize a combination of trade secrets, confidentiality policies, non-disclosure and other contractual arrangements in addition to relying on patent, copyright and trademark laws to protect our intellectual property rights. However, these measures may not be adequate to prevent or deter infringement or other misappropriation. Moreover, we may not be able to detect unauthorized use or take appropriate and timely steps to establish and enforce our proprietary rights. In fact, existing laws of some countries in which we conduct business offer only limited protection of our intellectual property rights, if at all.

Many key aspects of telecommunications and data network technology are governed by industry-wide standards, which are usable by all market participants. As the number of market entrants as well as the complexity of the technology increases, the possibility of functional overlap and inadvertent infringement of intellectual property rights also increases. Third parties have asserted, and may assert in the future, claims against us alleging that we infringe their intellectual property rights. Defending such claims may be expensive, time consuming and divert the efforts of our management and/or technical personnel. As a result of litigation, we could be required to pay damages and other compensation, develop non-infringing products/technology or enter into royalty or licensing agreements. However, we cannot be certain that any such licenses, if available at all, will be available to us on commercially reasonable terms.

Adverse resolution of litigation may harm our operating results or financial condition.

We are a party to lawsuits in the normal course of our business. Litigation can be expensive, lengthy and disruptive to normal business operations. Moreover, the results of complex legal proceedings are difficult to predict. An unfavorable resolution of a particular lawsuit could have a material adverse effect on our business, reputation, operating results, or financial condition.

As a publicly listed company, Ericsson is exposed to class-action lawsuits, in which plaintiffs allege that the Company or its officers have failed to comply with securities laws, stock market regulation or any other laws, regulations or requirements. Whether or not there is merit to such claims, the time and costs incurred to defend the Company and its officers and the potential settlement or compensation to the plaintiffs may have significant impact on our reported results and reputation. For additional information regarding certain of the lawsuits in which we are involved, see "Legal and Tax Proceedings" in the Board of Directors' Report.

We rely on a limited number of suppliers for the majority of our components and electronic manufacturing services.

Our ability to deliver according to market demands depends in large part on obtaining timely and adequate supply of materials, components and production capacity on competitive terms. Failure by any of our suppliers could interrupt our product supply and could significantly limit our sales or increase our costs. If we fail to anticipate customer demand properly, an over/undersupply of components and production capacity could occur. In many cases, some of our competitors also utilize the same contract manufacturers, and we could be blocked from acquiring the needed components or from increasing capacity if they have purchased capacity ahead of us. This factor could limit our ability to supply our customers or could increase our costs. At the same time, we commit to certain capacity levels or component quantities, which, if unused, will result in charges for unused capacity or scrapping costs.

We are dependent upon hiring and retaining highly qualified employees.

We believe that our future success depends in large part on our continued ability to hire, develop, motivate and retain engineers and other qualified personnel needed to develop successful new products, support our existing product range and provide services to our customers. Competition for skilled personnel and highly qualified managers in the telecommunications industry remains intense. We are continuously developing our remuneration and benefit policies as well as other measures. However, we may not be as successful at attracting and retaining such highly skilled personnel in the future.

We are dependent on access to short-term and long-term capital.

If we do not generate sufficient amounts of capital to support our operations, service our debt, continue our research and development and customer finance programs or we cannot raise sufficient amounts of capital at the times and on the terms required by us, our business will likely be adversely affected. Access to short-term funding may decrease or become more expensive as a result of our operational and financial condition and market conditions or due to deterioration in our credit rating. We cannot assure you that additional sources of funds will be available or available on reasonable terms.

As a Swedish company operating globally, we have substantial foreign exchange exposures.

With the majority of our cost base being Swedish krona (SEK) denominated and a very large share of sales in currencies other than SEK, and many subsidiaries outside Sweden, our foreign exchange exposure is significant. Currency exchange rate fluctuations affect our consolidated balance sheet, cash flows and income statement when foreign currencies are exchanged or translated to SEK. Our attempts to reduce the effect of exchange rate fluctuations through a variety of hedging activities may not be sufficient or successful, resulting in an adverse impact on our results.

A stronger SEK exchange rate would generally have a negative effect on our competitiveness compared to competitors with costs denominated in other currencies.

A significant interruption or other failure of our information technology (IT) operations or communications networks could have a material adverse affect on our operations and results.

Our business operations rely on complex IT operations and communications networks which are vulnerable to damage or disturbance from a variety of sources. Having outsourced a significant portion of our IT operations, we depend partly on security and reliability measures of external companies. Regardless of protection measures, essentially all IT systems and communications networks are susceptible to disruption from equipment failure, vandalism, computer viruses, security breaches, natural disasters, power outages and other events. Although we have assessed these risks and implemented controls and selected reputable companies for outsourced services, we cannot be sure that interruptions with material adverse effects will not occur.

Risks associated with owning Ericsson shares

Our share price has been and may continue to be volatile.

Our share price has been volatile due in part to the high volatility in the securities markets generally and for telecommunications and technology companies in particular, and in part due to the development in our market and our reported financial results, as well as statements and market speculation regarding our future prospects. Variations between our actual financial results and expectations of financial analysts and investors, as well as the timing or content of any profit warning announcements by us, may have significant impact on our share price.

Factors other than our financial results that may affect our share price include, but are not limited to, a weakening of our brand name or any circumstances causing adverse effects on our reputation, announcements by our customers, competitors or ourselves regarding capital spending plans of network operators, financial difficulties for network operators for whom we have provided financing or with whom we have entered into material contracts, awards of large supply agreements or contracts for network roll-out. Additional factors include but are not limited to: speculation in the press or investment community about the level of business activity or perceived growth in the market for mobile communications services and equipment; technical problems, in particular those relating to the introduction and viability of new network systems like 3G or IPTV; actual or expected results of ongoing or potential litigation involving ourselves or the markets in which we operate. Even though we may not be directly involved, announcements concerning bankruptcy or other similar reorganization proceedings involving, or any investigations into the accounting practices of, other telecommunications companies may materially adversely affect our share price.

Our ability to forecast and communicate our future results in a manner consistent with investor expectations may affect the market value of our shares.

Currency fluctuations may adversely affect the trading prices of our Class B shares and ADSs and the value of any distributions we make thereon.

Because our shares are quoted in Swedish kronor (SEK) on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm (our primary stock exchange), but on NASDAQ (ADSs) in USD, fluctuations in exchange rates between SEK and USD may affect the value of your investment. In addition, because we pay cash dividends in SEK, fluctuations in exchange rates may affect the value of distributions if arrangements with your bank, broker or depositary, in the case of ADSs, call for distributions to you in currencies other than SEK.