BUSINESS RISKS

Significant risks that could affect the Mazda Group’s business results and financial position include those listed below. This list, however, shows the main risks anticipated at the end of fiscal year March 2019, and does not represent a comprehensive list of all the risks faced by the Group. The forward-looking statements in this section are based on the judgments of the Group as of the end of fiscal year March 2019.

1 Economic Conditions Impacting the Mazda Group

Selling its products in Japan and other parts of the world, including in North America, Europe, and Asia, the Group is greatly impacted by economic trends and fluctuations in demand in each of its markets. Therefore, the Group’s business results and financial position could be adversely affected by, for example, an economic downturn, recession, changes in demand structure, declining demand, and intensifying price competition in its main markets.

2 Fluctuations in Exchange Rates

The Group is engaged in business activities on a global scale. The Group not only exports products from Japan to other parts of the world but also exports products manufactured at overseas plants to other markets in the world. These transactions are conducted in various currencies, and consequently its business results and financial position are exposed to the effects of fluctuations in exchange rates. In addition, as overseas assets and liabilities denominated in local currencies are translated into yen, there could be an adverse effect on shareholders’ equity through foreign currency translation adjustments due to exchange rate fluctuations. The Group uses forward exchange contracts and other instruments to minimize the impact of short-term exchange rate risk. However, depending on the circumstances of fluctuations in exchange rates, loss of opportunity could be generated.

3 Alliances and Joint Ventures

The Group is performing or examining joint activities with other companies under technology alliances, joint ventures, and in other forms with respect to the development, production, and sales of products. These joint activities are designed to optimize resources, facilitate their prioritization, and generate synergies. However, in the event of a disagreement over management, financial, or other matters between the parties involved, or in the event that the expected results were not produced due to such factors as changes to or terminations of alliances and joint ventures, the Group’s business results and financial position could be adversely affected. In addition, unintended changes to or terminations of alliances and joint ventures could have an adverse effect on the Group’s business results and financial position.

4 Statutory Regulations Covering the Environment

In addition to being subject to environmental regulations pertaining to fuel consumption and exhaust emissions, automobile safety, and the pollutant emission levels from manufacturing plants, the Group’s operations in each country where it does business are subject to various statutory regulations, such as labor regulations.

Going forward, the Group’s business results and financial position could be adversely affected by the increased costs associated with more stringent statutory regulations.

5 Market Competitiveness

The Group competes with a large number of companies in automobile markets in all parts of the world. Maintaining and enhancing the Group’s ability to compete in these markets, which includes maintaining and developing the Mazda brand value, is crucial to ensuring growth. Consequently, the Group is implementing a range of initiatives to boost its competitiveness in product development, manufacturing, sales, and other areas.

However, the Group’s business results and financial position could be adversely affected in the event that it fails to launch appealing products at opportune times, due to a failure to accurately ascertain market trends or as a result of issues related to technological capabilities and manufacturing. The same holds true if the Group fails to take effective steps to respond to customer values or changes thereof, including declines in market share or product prices, through its dealership network or sales methods.

6 Procurement of Materials and Components

The Group relies on numerous suppliers outside the Group for the procurement of materials and components. For that reason, the Group may face difficulties in procuring the necessary level of materials and components for volume production, due to supply constraints or reduced logistics functions in the event of these suppliers being affected by a disaster, due to tight supply balances, or due to changes to and breaches of supply contracts. Should the Group be unable to absorb the effects of any increases in the prices of the materials being procured by the Company—for example, by making internal efforts to boost productivity or passing on price rises to customers—or should procured materials and components be of insufficient quality, the possibility exists of a deterioration in output or higher costs, which could adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.
International Business Activities
In addition to Japan, the Group sells its products and carries out business activities in markets in all parts of the world, including the United States and Europe, as well as developing and emerging markets overseas. In these international markets, the Group is subject to the following potential risks, which could affect the Group’s business results and financial position if manifested:

- Adverse political and economic developments
- Impediments arising from changes in laws and regulations
- Import / export regulations, such as tariffs, detrimental taxes, and other regulations
- Difficulties in attracting and securing personnel
- Undeveloped infrastructure
- Strikes and other labor disputes
- Terrorist incidents, war, disease, and other factors leading to social disorder

Protection of Intellectual Property
In order to maintain competitiveness, the Group is working to accumulate and protect technologies and expertise that help it to develop unique products. At the same time, the Group is taking steps to prevent the infringement of third-party intellectual property rights. Nonetheless, should differences in recognition or opinion lead to a disputed infringement of third-party intellectual property rights that results in the Group being forced to halt the production and sales of products, or needing to pay damages, this could also adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.

The Group's intellectual property is not subject to complete protection in certain regions. In the event that third parties use the Group’s intellectual property rights on an unauthorized basis to produce similar products, the Group may have to pay substantial expenses for litigation, or experience a decline in sales due to an inability to offer unique products. This could adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.

Product Quality
While striving to improve the quality of its products to meet the requirements of the market, the Group also does its utmost to ensure the safety of its products. However, should a defect develop in a product due to unforeseen circumstances or a large-scale recall occur, this could adversely affect the Group's business results and financial position due to such factors as the incurring of significant costs, the Group’s diminished brand image, and loss of market trust.

Natural Disasters and Accidents
In addition to measures to protect its manufacturing sites and other important facilities against fire and earthquakes, the Group has concluded natural disaster insurance contracts and taken other steps to minimize the financial risk of such events. However, the ability of the Group to supply products may be severely disrupted in the event of a major natural disaster, such as an earthquake, typhoon, flood, or fire or other accident, which could adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.

Dependence on Information Technology
In the course of various business activities such as development, production, and sales of products, the Group utilizes information technology, networks, and systems. The Group's products are also equipped with these technologies, including driving support system, etc. Despite countermeasures implemented in information technology, networks, and systems to allow safe operations, such factors as failures in infrastructure, cyberattacks, and infection by computer viruses may result in suspension of business activities, loss of data, leakage of confidential information, and deterioration in product functions. Should these events occur, the Group’s business results and financial position could be adversely affected due to the incurring of costs associated with countermeasures, loss of product credibility, and damage to the brand image, etc.

Financial Accounting
Including the financial accounting factors set out below, the Group’s operating results and financial position could be affected by financial accounting assessment of its assets and liabilities as well as changes in or new applications of accounting standards.

1. Deferred Tax Assets
Provided on deductible temporary differences, deferred tax assets are recorded by assessing the likelihood of recovery based on expectations of future taxable income. However, the amount of deferred tax assets could be reduced by, for example, the recording of valuation allowances against deferred tax assets in the event that they are judged to be unrecoverable due to a deterioration in business conditions or in the event of tax reforms that include changes in tax rates. This could adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.

2. Impairment of Long-Lived Assets
With regard to long-lived assets, should the carrying amount be considered to be unrecoverable due, for example, to a deterioration in business conditions, an impairment loss against the carrying value of assets will be recorded. This could adversely affect the Group’s business results and financial position.
(iii) Retirement Benefits
Liability for retirement benefits changes in accordance with trends in retirement benefit obligations and pension assets. However, in the event of changes being made to the actuarial prerequisites or of a deterioration in fair value of plan assets caused by lower returns, the Group's business results and financial position could be adversely affected.

13 Changes in Financing Procurement Environment and Interest Rate Fluctuations
In addition to loans from banks, the Group has been raising funds by issuing its shares and bonds. However, in the event of turmoil in financial markets, tax reforms or institutional changes being made to government-affiliated financial organizations, or the downgrading of the Group's credit rating, the Group's business results and financial position could be adversely affected due to such factors as the increased funding costs and the difficulties associated with raising money for the amount of funds required. Moreover, factoring in the effect of interest rate changes on the Group's interest-bearing debt, were the costs of financing to increase due to a rise in interest rates, the Group's business results and financial position could also be adversely affected. In the event that any deterioration in the Group's financial standing were to infringe the financial covenants of some of the loans and lead to the forfeiture of the benefit of time, the Group's business results and financial position could be adversely affected.

14 Compliance and Reputation
Commencing with information security efforts to protect personal information and confidential information, the Group has taken preventive measures regarding compliance, such as compliance with the law. In addition, in the event of a compliance-related incident being detected, the Group has a rapid response system in place to prevent any impact on the Group's social credibility and reputation. However, the Group cannot guarantee that there is no possibility of a legal violation occurring in the future. Should there be evidence of an illegal act or should the rapidity and content of the response prove insufficient, the Group's social credibility and reputation could be harmed, and the Group's business results and financial position could be adversely affected.

15 Forecasts
In May 2019, the Group announced a Medium-Term Management Policy detailing its management policy for the six fiscal years from fiscal year March 2020 (from fiscal year March 2020 through to fiscal year March 2025). This sets out the direction and measures we intend to take toward attaining our ideal for the Mazda brand for 2030–40. If the execution of the various measures does not realize the expected benefits owing to such factors as substantial changes in the operating environment and slower progress with the plan than projected, the Group's business results and financial position could be adversely affected.