

Exhibit A

Agreement

WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES ONLY

Equitas Limited
33 St Mary Axe
London
EC3A 8LL

22 January 2004

For Attention of: Rhydian Williams

Dear Sirs

1. ACE Group proceeds

1.1 In compromise of disputed positions respecting the non-novated AFIA reinsurance treaties underwritten by or on behalf of The Home Insurance Company ("Home") through the Home's UK Branch (the "AFIA Treaties"), we agree that, as soon as reasonably practicable following the agreement of a number of Informal Creditors' Committee members sufficient to give adequate assurance to Home that the Scheme (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.1.2 below) will be approved by the requisite majorities of AFIA Cedents (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.1.2 below), we will take the following steps:

- 1.1.1 notify members of the Informal Creditors' Committee that a sufficient number of Informal Creditors' Committee members (as described in paragraph 1.1 above) have agreed to the arrangement reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement by returning a signed copy of this letter agreement to us;
- 1.1.2 seek the approval of the supervising New Hampshire Court ("New Hampshire Order") to a compromise involving the implementation of a scheme of arrangement pursuant to section 425 of the Companies Act 1985 ("Scheme") between Home and cedents of Home in respect of the AFIA Treaties ("AFIA Cedents"), the main features of which are described in sub-paragraph 1.9 below, such New Hampshire Order to be on terms that it is conditional upon:
 - (1) the sanction of the English Court in respect of the Scheme;
 - (2) an order of the English Court approving the remission of the Home's assets situated in England and Wales (other than the "Net Recoveries" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.2 below)) to the New Hampshire liquidator for administration and distribution as part of the New Hampshire liquidation ("Global Liquidation Order"); and
 - (3) the approval, or "non-objection", of the Financial Services Authority to the Scheme and to the making of the Global Liquidation Order ("FSA Approval");

1.1.3 as soon as reasonably practicable after the making of the New Hampshire Order:

- (1) make an application to the English Court for permission to convene a meeting of AFIA cedents to approve the Scheme; and
- (2) following the approval of the Scheme by the requisite majorities of AFIA Cedents, seek the sanction of the English Court in respect of the Scheme,

provided that the Scheme shall not become effective on its terms until after the making of the Global Liquidation Order and the granting of FSA Approval,

the New Hampshire Order and the Scheme to be upon such terms as may be approved by the New Hampshire Court and English Court; and

1.1.4 in order to reduce the costs of disputed claim proceedings to the Home estate, the Liquidator will recommend to the New Hampshire Court that in the resolution of reinsurance claims against Home under the AFIA Treaties, where the reinsurance contract under which the claim arises contemplates arbitration or other dispute resolution procedures with more limited discovery than that permitted under the Order Establishing Procedures Regarding Claims Filed with The Home Insurance Company in Liquidation entered by the New Hampshire Court on December 19 2003 or such amended order as appropriate ("the Claims Procedures Order"), discovery in the disputed claim proceeding (including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, requests for documents, interrogatories, requests for admissions, or evidence depositions) shall be limited to that available under the contractually contemplated procedures.

1.2 "Net Recoveries" means 50% of the "Proceeds" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.3 below), plus 100% of those proceeds described in sub-paragraph 1.3.5 below.

1.3 "Proceeds" means the proceeds received by Home from the ACE Group or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) (after deducting amounts offset between Home and either the relevant ACE Group company concerned or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) in relation to AFIA business and after having taken all reasonable arguments and/or defences as regards the validity of such off-set) with respect to the AFIA Treaties (whether such proceeds are derived through an ongoing resolution process with the ACE Group or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) or through a commutation or similar compromise arrangement with any ACE Group company or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) relating to that company's indemnity and/or reinsurance obligations to Home) net of:

1.3.1 the costs of the UK provisional liquidation;

1.3.2 any collection costs;

1.3.3 costs incurred in our seeking the orders of the New Hampshire and English Courts set out in sub-paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above (including, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the costs of any legal and other professional advisors in obtaining and implementing such approvals);

1.3.4 the proceeds received by Home from the ACE Group or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) with respect to those inwards liabilities of

Home under the AFIA Treaties which are, or will upon final adjudication be, settled by way of offset as between Home and the relevant AFIA Cedent concerned (whether such offset right derives from contract or statute); and

- 1.3.5 the proceeds received by Home from the ACE Group or any Third Party Reinsurer with respect to Home's liability under an adverse costs order as described in sub-paragraph 1.9.7 below (which amount shall be credited direct to Net Recoveries, as provided in that sub-paragraph).
- 1.4 We also agree that during the "Standstill Period" (as defined in paragraph 1.6 below) we will not enter into a commutation or similar compromise arrangement with any ACE Group company or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 hereof) relating to that company's indemnity and/or reinsurance obligations to Home in respect of the AFIA Treaties without first:
- (1) promptly consulting with the Informal Creditors' Committee as to any such proposed commutation;
 - (2) providing all relevant documentation to the Informal Creditors' Committee at least 5 working days (where practicable) prior to such consultation (and to this end, members of the Informal Creditors' Committee shall be deemed to have requested notice and entered into a confidentiality agreement with the Liquidator pursuant to paragraph 3 of the Order Establishing Procedures for Review of Reinsurance Commutation Agreements entered by the New Hampshire Court on July 23, 2003 or any such amended order as appropriate ("the Commutations Order")). If it is not practicable for Home to comply with this 5 working days notice period, Home shall make all reasonable efforts to provide as much notice as is possible in the circumstances; and
 - (3) providing notice to the Informal Creditors' Committee in advance of any application to the supervising New Hampshire Court to approve the terms of any such proposed commutation, in accordance with the provisions of the Commutations Order.
- 1.5 You agree that:
- 1.5.1 during the Standstill Period you shall not seek to reach any agreement or arrangement with any member of the ACE Group or any "Third Party Reinsurer" (as defined in sub-paragraph 1.8 below) whereunder you receive payment from any such entity in respect of the AFIA Treaties; and
 - 1.5.2 in determining your entitlement (if any) to receive any distribution payable to you in your capacity as a creditor in Home's New Hampshire liquidation you will bring into account, and give credit for, any payments received by you pursuant to the arrangements described in this paragraph 1.

- 1.6 "Standstill Period" shall mean the period commencing upon the date on which you agree to the arrangement reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement by returning a signed copy of this letter agreement to us and ending on the "Standstill Termination Date" (as defined in paragraph 1.7 below).
- 1.7 "Standstill Termination Date" shall mean the earlier of:
- 1.7.1 27 February 2004, if by that date Home has not notified members of the Informal Creditors' Committee that it has determined that a sufficient number of Informal Creditors' Committee members (as described in paragraph 1.1 above) have agreed to the arrangement reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement by returning a signed copy of this letter agreement to us by that date;
 - 1.7.2 the date upon which the New Hampshire Court denies the New Hampshire liquidator's motion for the approval of the New Hampshire Order in substantially similar terms to those described in paragraph 1.1 above;
 - 1.7.3 the date upon which the English Court refuses to grant permission to convene a meeting of AFIA Cedents to approve the Scheme in substantially similar terms to those described in paragraph 1.1 above;
 - 1.7.4 the date upon which a majority in number representing 75% in value of the AFIA Cedents do not approve the Scheme at the meeting specially convened for this purpose (or at any adjournment thereof) in substantially similar terms to those described in paragraph 1.1 above;
 - 1.7.5 the date upon which the English Court refuses to sanction the Scheme in substantially similar terms to those described in paragraph 1.1 above;
 - 1.7.6 the date upon which the English Court refuses to make the Global Liquidation Order;
 - 1.7.7 the date upon which the Financial Services Authority notifies Home that it will not grant the FSA Approval; or
 - 1.7.8 1 June 2004 (or such other date as Home and a sufficient number of Informal Creditors' Committee members (as described in paragraph 1.1 above) shall agree from time to time), if the English Court has not by that date sanctioned the Scheme under section 425 of the Companies Act 1985 as envisaged in paragraph 1.1.2 above.
- 1.8 "Third Party Reinsurer" shall mean a reinsurer (other than an ACE Group company), which has underwritten reinsurance in relation to AFIA business directly in favour of Home as reassured.
- 1.9 It is intended that the Scheme will have the following main features:
- 1.9.1 subject to sub-paragraph 1.9.7 below, Net Recoveries will be distributed pari passu (as far as reasonably practicable) to all AFIA Cedents according to the value of their claims against Home under the AFIA Treaties as agreed or adjudicated (net of any applicable set-off) in the New Hampshire liquidation of Home;

- 1.9.2 Net Recoveries (together with all investment income and gain accruing thereon) will be held on a segregated basis by the Scheme Administrators for application in accordance with the Scheme;
- 1.9.3 a Creditors' Committee will be established with the right to be consulted by the Scheme Administrators on any transaction or litigation as between Home and any ACE Group company which is likely to have a material impact upon Net Recoveries;
- 1.9.4 Home will not enter into a commutation or similar compromise arrangement with any ACE Group company or any Third Party Reinsurer relating to that company's indemnity and/or reinsurance obligations to Home in respect of the AFIA Treaties without first:
- (1) promptly consulting with the Creditors' Committee as to any such proposed commutation;
 - (2) providing all relevant documentation to the Creditors' Committee at least 5 working days (where practicable) prior to such consultation (and to this end, members of the Creditors' Committee shall be deemed to have requested notice and entered into a confidentiality agreement with the Liquidator pursuant to paragraph 3 of the Commutations Order). If it is not practicable for Home to comply with this 5 working days notice period, Home shall make all reasonable efforts to provide as much notice as is possible in the circumstances; and
 - (3) providing notice to the Creditors' Committee in advance of any application to the supervising New Hampshire Court to approve the terms of any such proposed commutation or arrangement, in accordance with the provisions of the Commutations Order;
- 1.9.5 in the event of a commutation with the ACE Group, the Scheme Administrators will propose to AFIA Cedents a cut-off mechanism;
- 1.9.6 the costs referred to in sub-paragraph 1.3 above are to be recovered out of the Proceeds on an incurred basis; and
- 1.9.7 should a claim be denied in the Home liquidation and a disputed claim proceeding ensue, nothing in the Scheme shall preclude an AFIA Cedent, pursuant to RSA 402-C:6, from seeking an adverse cost order against Home in such proceeding, although under the Scheme the AFIA Cedent concerned will not be permitted to enforce payment by Home of any adverse cost order that may be forthcoming as an administrative expense in the Home liquidation, but shall rather be entitled to reimbursement to the extent of any cash recovered with respect thereto from an ACE Group company or from a Third Party Reinsurer, which cash recovery shall be credited directly to the Net Recoveries and shall be payable in full to the AFIA Cedent concerned from the Net Recoveries in priority to any distribution of the Net Recoveries to AFIA Cedents pursuant to paragraph 1.9.1 hereof.

2. Information

You agree that you will provide to us by 13 February 2004 sufficient information concerning your claims under the AFIA Treaties (including reasonable details of paid losses, outstanding losses and IBNR) only to enable us to make the determination referred to in paragraph 1.7.1

hereof, and we will not use that information for the purposes of agreeing claims or obtaining payment from the ACE Group or Third Party Reinsurers until the Scheme is in place or you expressly agree otherwise.

3. Proof of Claim In Home's liquidation proceeding

We acknowledge that, by providing information to us pursuant to paragraph 2 of this letter, you shall not be deemed to be submitting a proof of claim or similar formal claim against Home, either in the New Hampshire liquidation proceeding or in any English proceeding. We acknowledge that, by providing us with the said information pursuant to this letter, you thereby reserve all your rights in that regard.

4. Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Save as provided above, we agree that we shall not, without your prior agreement, disclose any of the information provided under paragraph 2 above to any third party (save where required so to do so by law) with the exception of (a) our legal, accounting and actuarial advisers; (b) any applicable regulator; and (c) courts of competent jurisdiction for purposes of seeking judicial approval of the arrangement proposed herein.

We furthermore reaffirm that this letter and its contents constitute "Confidential Information" within the meaning of the Confidentiality Undertaking executed by you.

5. Authorisation

The New Hampshire Insurance Commissioner, Roger A. Sevigny, in his capacity as Liquidator of Home, has approved this proposal and authorised its circulation by the provisional liquidators to members of the Informal Creditors' Committee.

6. Acceptance by Informal Creditors' Committee members

If this proposal is acceptable to you, please indicate your acceptance to its terms by signing one copy of this letter agreement where indicated below and returning such copy, duly signed, to us as soon as possible.

G. H. Hughes

.....
Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement

[Signature]

.....
Signed by Equitas Limited

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G. H. Hughes

.....
Signed by **G. H. Hughes**
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement

[Signature]
.....
Signed by ~~Weavers~~ **JAMES TYSON**
for and on behalf of
THE BERMUDA FIRE & MARINE INSURANCE COMPANY
(IN LIQUIDATION)

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Gareth Hughes

.....
Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement

A. Brennan

.....
Signed by Mentor Insurance Company (UK) Ltd

*for and on behalf of
A. Brennan, Director
L&L Consulting Ltd a duly authorised agent*

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G. H. Hughes

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Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

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W. K. R.

.....
Signed by Unionamerica Insurance Company

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.....

Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement


.....

Signed by English and America Insurance Co Ltd

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Gareth Kyle
.....

Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement

[Signature]
.....

Signed by Excess Insurance Company Ltd
DAVID RUBIN
MANAGING DIRECTOR

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Gordon H. Hughes

Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement.

Terry M. Duolen

Signed by Continental Insurance Company New York

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G. H. Hughes

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Signed by G. H. Hughes
Joint Provisional Liquidator
for and on behalf of
The Home Insurance Company

We hereby agree to the arrangements reflected by the proposals set out in this letter agreement

John P...

.....
Signed by Riverstone Management Ltd