

CRESCO LTD.

Financial Results Briefing for the Fiscal Year Ended March 2020

May 14, 2020

Event Summary

[Company Name]	CRESCO LTD.	
[Event Type]	Earnings Announcement	
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[Participants]		
[Number of Speakers]	1 Hiroyuki Nemoto	President, Executive Officer

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Presentation

Moderator: Now, we are holding a briefing on financial results for the fiscal year ending March 2020 for CRESCO LTD. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to watch this briefing. Today, Mr. Hiroyuki Nemoto, President and Executive Officer, will give you a briefing. After the briefing, he will answer the questions you have sent us.

Well then, President Nemoto, please start.

Nemoto: Hello everyone. I am Nemoto, President of CRESCO LTD.

Thank you for attending, albeit online, our financial results briefing for the year ended March 31, 2020. I would like to explain the results for about 30 minutes using the PowerPoint here, and then answer your questions. Thank you in advance.

Now, let me start the briefing right away.

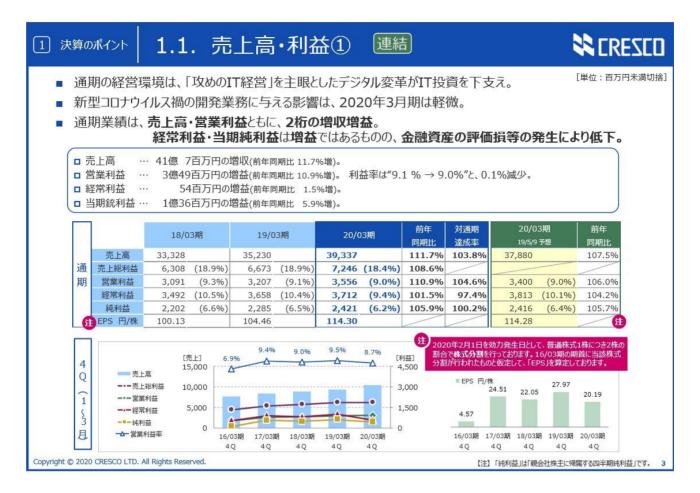
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These are the financial highlights. Looking at the full fiscal year, even though there were some concerns about the new coronavirus, but as a whole, I think it was a very good year in terms of IT investments made to promote digital transformation. In February and March, we somewhat felt the effects of the new coronavirus, but the effects on the financial results were minor.

Both net sales and operating income increased by double digits for the full fiscal year. Specifically, ordinary income and net income increased, but at the end of the fiscal year, a valuation loss on financial assets was incurred due to the impact of the new coronavirus, which brought down the figures to a lower level than originally expected.

Net sales were JPY39.337 billion, operating income was JPY3.556 billion, ordinary income was JPY3.712 billion, and net income was JPY2.421 billion.

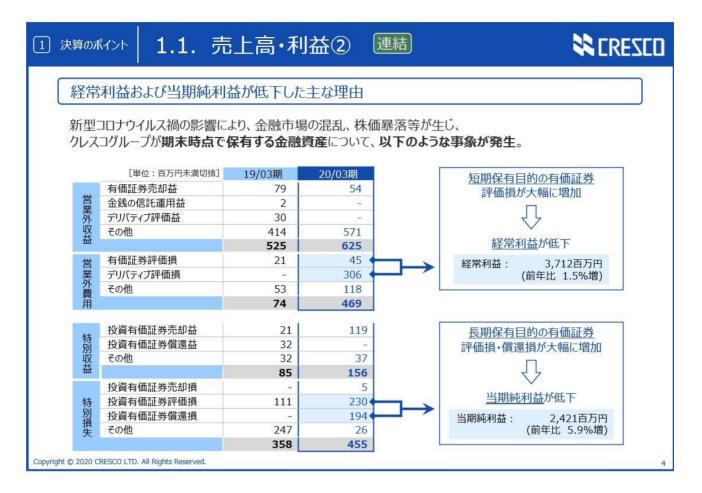
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I mentioned earlier that there was a valuation loss incurred at the end of the fiscal year, and this slide shows the effects of the valuation loss. It shows how the fiscal year ended March 2020 compared with the previous fiscal year, which ended March 2019.

Nonoperating sections are for the securities held for a short period of time, and there is a loss on valuation of these securities and on valuation of derivatives. Because of these losses, ordinary income showed a decline even though non-operating income increased. In short, we incurred much more costs than the last fiscal year.

The extraordinary income-and-loss section is for the securities held for a long period of time. We have also incurred a loss on valuation of these securities, resulting in a decline in net income. The net income dropped considerably in mid-March, but then picked up somewhat, so I think that we managed to post an increase in sales and profits compared with the previous fiscal year.

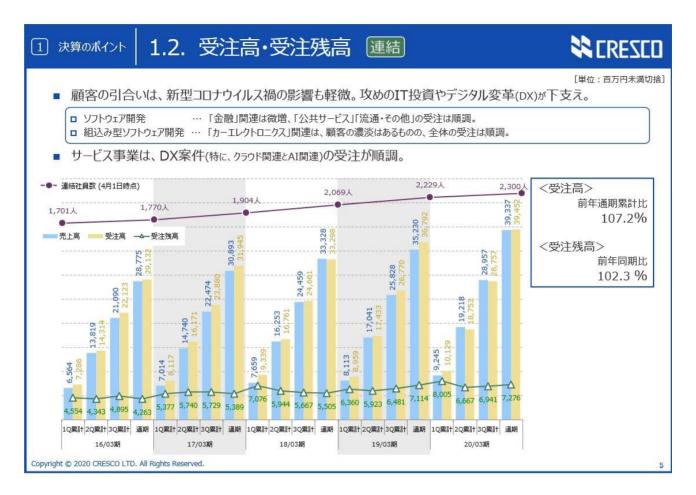
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Looking at the performance of our main business to the end of March, as I mentioned earlier, our performance was almost in line plan. It is just that, at the end of the fiscal year, we felt a little impact.

The order backlog was 102.3% of the previous year's level. We believe that the Company's performance has been steady.

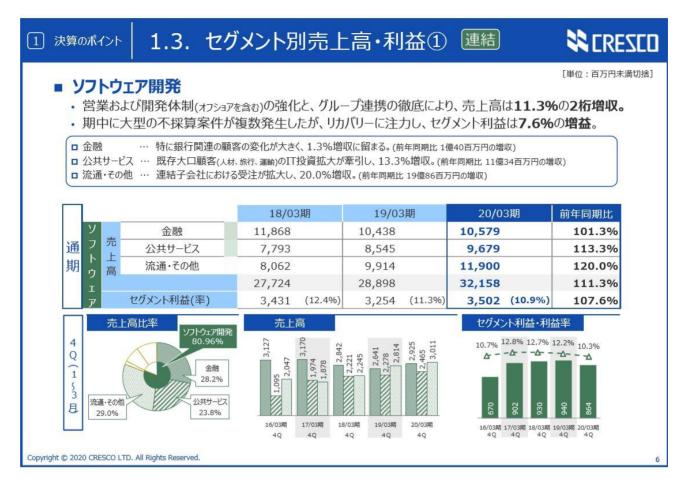
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By business segment, the software development business posted a 11.3% increase on sales and a 7.6% increase on income.

As I will explain in more detail later, in fact, we had some projects that turned out to be unprofitable not only within the Company but also in group companies, which somewhat pushed down the income growth.

In the finance business segment, the sales remained virtually unchanged or posted a slight increase of 1.3% from the previous year. The public-services business segment posted a 13.3% increase. In the distribution and other-business segment, we posted a considerable increase in sales by 20% largely thanks to the contribution of our subsidiary companies.

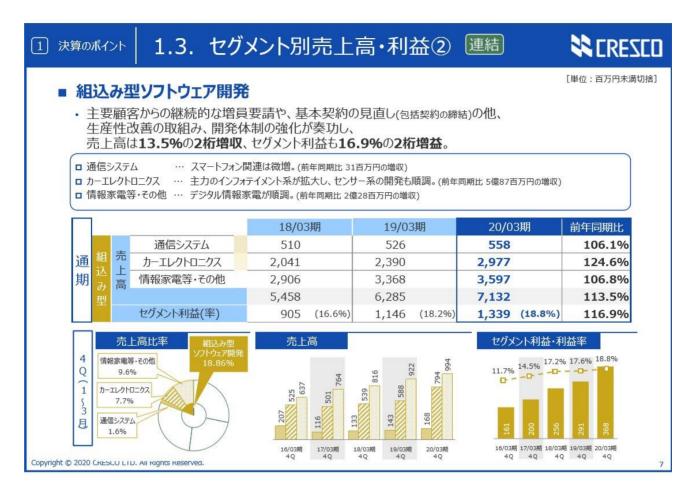
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In the embedded software business, sales increased by 13.5% and profits by 16.9%, resulting in double-digit growth in revenue.

Sales of the telecommunication systems business remained almost unchanged at 106.1% of the previous fiscal year. In the automotive electronics business, we saw a considerable growth in demand not only for infotainment software, which has been our core business, but also for sensor-related software to 124.6% of the previous fiscal year. Sales of software for information and other appliances stood at 106.8% owing to the strong sales of digital information appliances.

That's all for our Company's results of the fiscal year ended in March 2020.

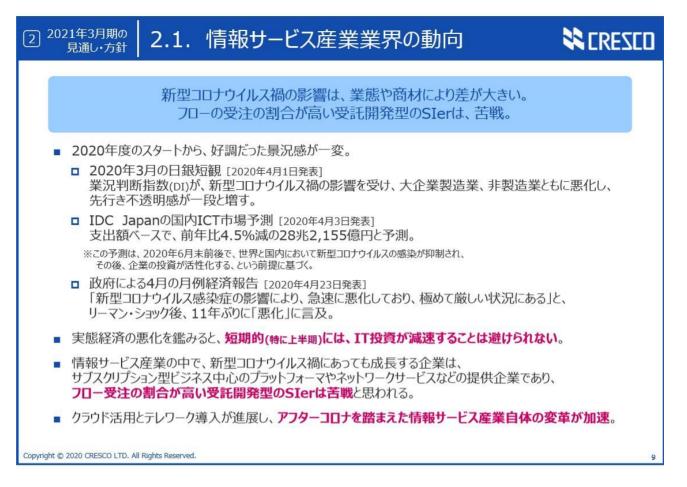
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I believe that the main topic here will be about the current fiscal year, that is, what the fiscal year ending March 2021 will be like, so I'd like to talk about it including my own thoughts.

Our company is in the software-development business, which is called Sler. In the information technology sector, some Slers have been positively affected (by the new coronavirus) while others have been negatively affected. I think that the differences in the effects among companies stem from the types of business and products of each company.

Our business involves not only the stock-type business but also a considerable amount of the flow-type business. The flow-type business consists of *ad hoc* orders received in one fiscal year. So, I think that the companies that receive these flow-type orders in great numbers will probably have a hard time because of the expected effects (of the coronavirus) on their clients.

We introduced several indicators on the slide, and the second one—the prediction by IDC Japan—was issued on April 3, which is a little while ago. According to the prediction, it is expected that the amount of expenditure of the current fiscal year will decrease by 4.5% YoY. Despite their prediction, how much the expenditure will actually decrease is difficult to see at the moment. Currently, we are still uncertain about the figure.

Our predictions are written in pink in the lower part of the slide. We foresee that the amount (of IT investments) will decline in the short term because the real economy will be negatively affected and some clients in certain industries will suffer a serious decline in business. In fact, at the end of April, right before the Golden Week holiday season started, we were asked by clients to suspend or postpone several large-scale projects that were booked for this fiscal year.

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As written below this prediction and as I mentioned earlier, we also have quite a few flow-type projects booked for this fiscal year, which will pose a challenge to us.

In fact, the problem is that it has become difficult to conduct sales activities. Both our clients and our employees have shifted to remote work, which has made it difficult for us to do business. Nevertheless, I believe that the demands for online-based tools, like the one used for today's financial results briefing session, will surely grow. Business operations will be increasingly conducted online, and the use of cloud services and telecommuting will keep expanding. I think that, along with these trends, the utilization of IT services will surely expand.

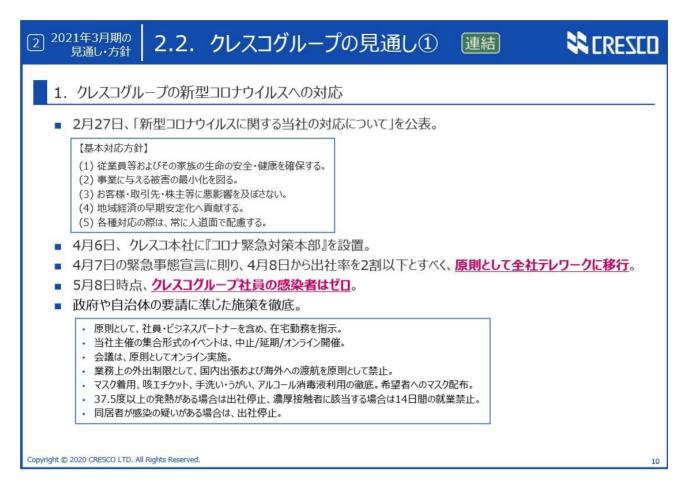
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On this slide, we wrote a little bit about the preventive measures we have taken against the new coronavirus within the CRESCO Group.

The basic policy was issued on February 27 for the Group companies and external parties. Because the new coronavirus is infectious, the first priority is protecting the safety and health of employees and their families. The next focus is on ensuring business continuity so as to minimize damage to the Group's businesses. This is achieved by minimizing damage to the business. The basic policy was formulated centering on these goals, and we are taking preventive measures based on the basic policy.

As it became apparent that the state of emergency would be declared in April, we set up the Group's response head the day before the declaration was made. At the headquarters, we are holding meetings every day to discuss specific matters concerning the new coronavirus, including instructions to give to the Group's employees, and day-to-day checking of the status of infection as well as the infection status within our client companies.

We are now in the process of shifting to remote work. Because of the nature of our business, it is quite easy for us to telecommute. Thus, we are aiming to reduce the ratio of employees working in the company's office to less than 20% of the entire workforce. As all our Group companies have introduced the remote work, more than 80% of the employees are telecommuting as of the end of April. As you can see on this slide, there is no employee infected with the new coronavirus within our Group as of May 8. In fact, there have been a few employees who have had close contact with infected persons, but all of them have been confirmed to be uninfected. Our basic stance is to take measures required by the national and local governments.

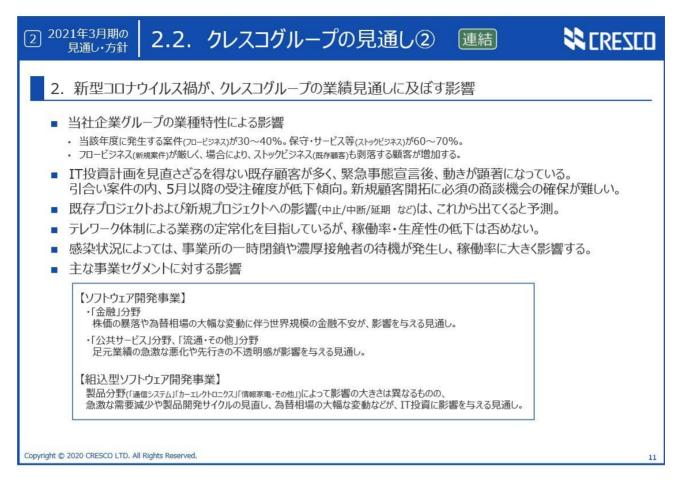
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How will this coronavirus crisis affect our business performance?

As I mentioned earlier, in our Group, the flow-type business consisting of ad hoc projects accounts for 30% to 40% of all orders received during a fiscal year, while the stock-type projects, including maintenance and service that we can predict to some extent, account for 60% to 70%. We are having an especially difficult time in gaining new projects in this flow-type business. As I mentioned earlier, at the end of April, as far as I know, two big projects have been suspended.

In addition, we are likely to lose some stock-type business projects for which we thought we would surely receive orders. The situation varies widely from client to client, but the impression I currently have is that the clients in industries such as travel and air transport are heavily cutting back on IT investments as much as possible because their main businesses are suffering seriously. However, they are keeping the minimum services, such as maintenance, as they have been talking about since around March.

In addition, we have felt some negative impact from clients in temporary staffing and real estate businesses. On the other hand, the industries from which we have not felt much impact are manufacturing and financial service sectors. Most of the projects we have with clients in these sectors are the development of embedded systems. In the financial sector, there are some sites incapable of shifting to remote work and, therefore, the projects with them are temporarily being suspended, from what we have heard, and there has been no project that we have lost completely.

On the other hand, we have heard from our customers that they will review their business plans in April through May, so in the future we expect that there will be changes in the clients' plans.

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Telecommuting has expanded within the Group and now over 80% of the workforce is working remotely. We are doing better than expected with some operations, but in employee utilization rate, productivity level, and so forth we will inevitably see a slight decline. Fortunately, none of our employees has been infected with the new coronavirus and none of our Group companies has been forced to shut down its office. If this happens, I think we will suffer the impact of the virus a little more.

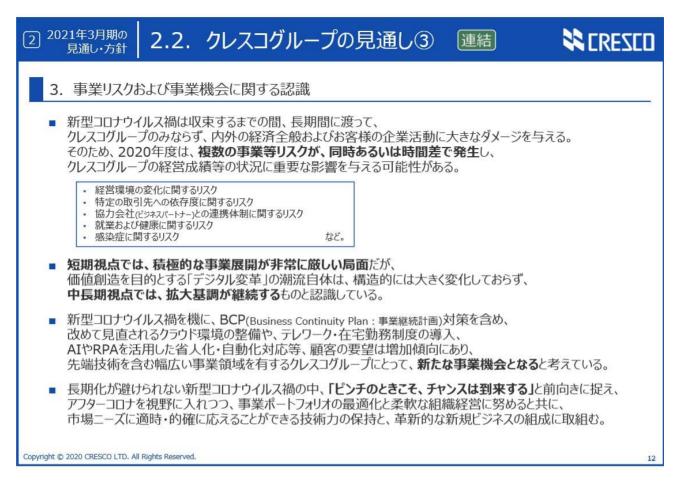
The effects of each business segment are as I described earlier. We believe that the impact on the finance, manufacturing, and embedded system development businesses has not yet been so significant.

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Looking at the figures in fiscal 2020, the impact of the new coronavirus was the greatest at present, resulting from the changes in the business environment brought about by the virus. Specifically, our clients' businesses have suffered damage or impact from the new coronavirus crisis, which are prompting them to review planned investments. This trend will continue in the future. There is also the issue stemming from our dependence on business partners which, in my opinion, will not show up so much.

Conversely, when it comes to collaboration with partner companies and business partners, there have not been so many people who have been fired by their employees or lost their jobs in the IT industry. Yet, there will be companies that lost projects temporarily and experience a severe reduction in sales, even though their sales are not lost completely, or to which orders suddenly stop coming in. Some of our business partners with a weak business base may experience such situations and have to file for bankruptcy. We expect these risks.

In the short term, the situation seems to be a little difficult, but from a medium- to long-term perspective, my outlook is not very pessimistic because the current digital transformation trend and the idea of using IT to change the ways people work will continue.

Conversely, if we do not keep up with this trend, it won't be too much to say that some companies will only do business that can be performed remotely. So, I am not concerned that the current trend will continue over the medium to long term. Indeed, I think that we will turn the current situation into a new business opportunity by offering and selling customers new products that utilize latest technologies.

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2 2021年3月期の 見通し・方針 2.2. クレスコグループの見通し④ 連結 除 CRESE	
4. 2021年3月期の連結業績予想について	
■ 新型コロナウイルス禍の当社企業グループ業績への影響は 『精緻に把握することが困難』	
 ・ 顧客のIT投資の抑制(受注減少、プロジェクトの中止、中断、延期等) ・ 労働環境の変化(テレワークへの移行、時差通勤等) ・ 関係者の罹患対応 など 	
 現時点で入手可能かつ合理的な情報による判断および以下の仮定に基づき、業績予想を作成。 新型コロナウイルス禍は、第2四半期後半から収束に向い、下期には受注も徐々に好転する。 	
 ② 上期は、主要顧客に著しい悪化影響が生じ、計画見直しによる受注減が発生する。 ③ 2020年4月1日付で「株式会社エニシアス」を連結子会社としており、業績の底上げを期待。 ④ 下期の回復基調は、上期の落ち込みをカバーするまでには至らず、通期業績は前年度並みに着地。 	
 コスト面は、新型コロナウイルス禍の現状に鑑み、当初計画を見直し。不要不急の経費は削減。 	
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It is difficult to make precise earnings forecasts for the current fiscal year. Judging from the reasonable information currently available, the first half of the year will probably be quite difficult. I would like to see the new coronavirus crisis settle in the first half, from around summertime. After the crisis settles, I assume that the figures will pick up a little in the second half. We made the earnings forecasts based on this assumption.

As I wrote in (3), we acquired a company called Enisias whose annual sales are JPY1 billion and we hope that this acquisition will enhance the consolidated financial results. Nevertheless, we feel that it will be somewhat difficult to post an increase of the previous financial year's level, so we came up with the full-year earnings forecasts for the current fiscal year on par with the previous fiscal year.

In addition, we revised non-essential costs and significantly cut back on such expenses including, among others, those for events.

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		20/03期							21/03期		
2		19/5/9 予想 前年 同期比			実績		前年 同期比	達成率	20/5/8 予想		前年 同期比
2	売上高	18,460		108.3%	19,218		112.8%	104.1%	19,000		98.9%
Q 累	売上総利益				3,586	(18.7%)	116.9%				/
* 計	営業利益	1,500	(8.1%)	106.7%	1,726	(9.0%)	122.8%	115.1%	1,450	(7.6%)	84.0%
āl	経常利益	1,704	(9.2%)	99.0%	1,896	(9.9%)	110.2%	111.3%	1,550	(8.2%)	81.7%
	純利益	1,117	(6.1%)	103.8%	1,139	(5.9%)	105.8%	102.0%	1,040	(5.5%)	91.3%
	EPS 円/株	102.10			52.74				49.55		/
			20/03期						21/03期		
		19/5/9 🗄	予想	前年 同期比	実績		前年同期比	達成率	20/5/8 予想		前年同期比
·¥	売上高	37,880		107.5%	39,337	1	111.7%	103.8%	40,000		101.7%
通	売上総利益				7,246	(18.4%)	108.6%				/
期	営業利益	3,400	(9.0%)	106.0%	3,556	(9.0%)	110.9%	104.6%	3,400	(8.5%)	95.6%
	経常利益	3,813	(10.1%)	104.2%	3,712	(9.4%)	101.5%	97.4%	3,600	(9.0%)	97.0%
	純利益	2,416	(6.4%)	105.7%	2,421	(6.2%)	105.9%	100.2%	2,450	(6.1%)	101.2%
		114,28			114.30		/		116.72		6

Now, let's look at the earnings forecast for the current fiscal year. Specifically, we have set our first-half forecasts for net sales of JPY19 billion, operating income of JPY1.45 billion, ordinary income of JPY1.55 billion, and net income of JPY1.04 billion, all below the previous fiscal year's figures.

For the full fiscal year, we have set our forecasts for net sales of JPY40 billion, operating profit of JPY 3.4 billion, ordinary profit of JPY3.6 billion, and net profit of JPY2.45 billion, assuming that earnings will pick up a little in the second half. Most of these figures are on par with the previous fiscal year with profits declining slightly.

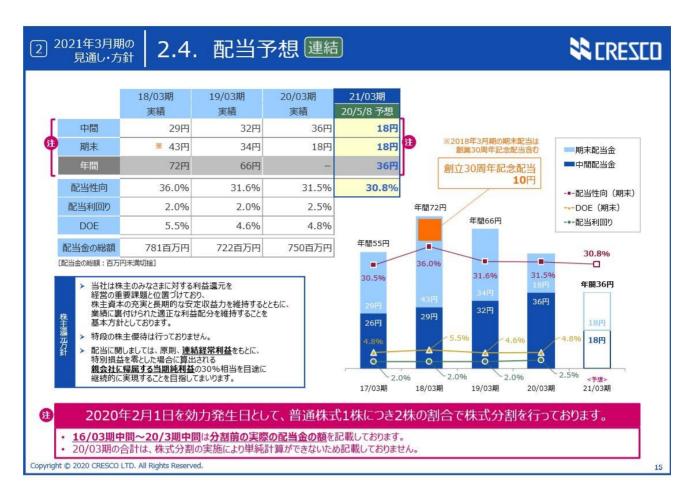
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Dividends are expected to be on par with those of the previous fiscal year. Since we conducted a two-for-one stock split in this February, we expect the interim dividend to be JPY18 and the year-end dividend to be JPY36 per share.

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Now, let's move on to our policy for the current fiscal year.

Our policy has not changed much from the previous fiscal year. We have the five-year business vision named "CRESCO Ambition," and because this is its fifth year, we will operate business in line with the vision.

Looking at the current fiscal year, it is clear that there will be areas in which the orders from existing customers will inevitably decrease. For those areas, we will strive to gain new customers and expand the portfolio of businesses while spending more effort on contacting customers to secure the number of orders received.

Another focus area is advanced technology. For a long time, we have focused on ensuring profitability by providing clients with high-value-added businesses that utilize cutting-edge technologies. We also focus on promoting work-style reform. Working styles have already changed considerably in response to the new coronavirus crisis, but we would like to strive to improve productivity and employee satisfaction.

Another thing I want to pursue is the promotion of alliances. As I wrote on the right, we have identified issues that need to be addressed. I would like to comment on the progress made on these issues, including what has been done, after the financial results briefing for the first quarter.

I will now move on to look at the issues to be addressed in the previous fiscal year and provide an overview of them.

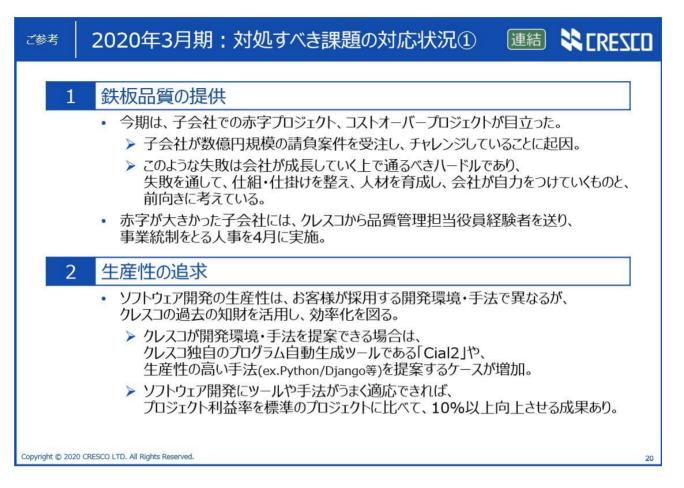
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In the supplementary materials, this shows the issues we found that had to be addressed in the fiscal year ending March 2020, most of which are about the fourth quarter of the fiscal year.

About the issue of providing 100% reliable quality, we have received complaints from our shareholders on the fact that we have unprofitable projects every year. In the previous fiscal year, there were a noticeable number of large-scale projects at the Group's subsidiaries that turned out to be unprofitable or resulted in cost overruns if not unprofitable.

I think this is due to the fact that our subsidiaries have taken on contracts for projects worth hundreds of millions of yen, like JPY300 million or JPY500 million. In my opinion, these failures are necessary hurdles to overcome for companies to grow. I just hope that each Group company will come up with the mechanisms and methods to overcome, develop human resources, and develop its own strength.

However, as the parent company, we have realized the need to help the Group companies to overcome the issue of unprofitable projects. Therefore, we started addressing the issue since April to send experienced officers in charge of quality management to subsidiaries that run an especially large deficit to implement business controls.

Regarding the second issue of pursuing productivity, some people wanted to know how much profit we made by pursuing productivity, so I would like to explain a little about it. The development work we do differs from client to client in terms of environment and methods for development, but we make it a rule to make efforts to improve the efficiency of development work by harnessing our intellectual properties and experience.

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Whenever we can suggest a development environment or method, we have increasingly made proposals using the latest methods with high productivity, such as a tool developed by CRESCO to automatically generate programs called Python/Django.

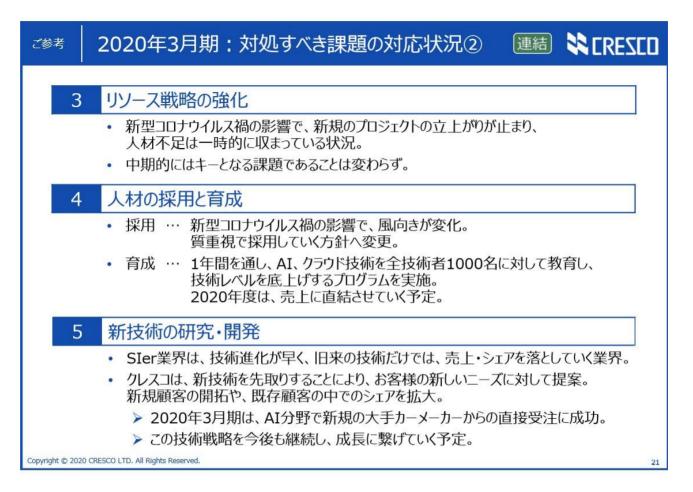
If we do this well, we can expect project profitability to increase by more than 10% compared to standard projects. There have been many projects like that. So, although these are all small efforts, we have taught our employees to make these efforts in our projects, and we are accumulating and utilizing such knowhow as intellectual properties.

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At present, in terms of status of human resources, it seems that the issue of human resource shortage has temporarily subsided because new projects have been suspended or stopped coming in. In the medium term, I believe that the shortage of human resources will be a key issue.

Speaking of recruitment and development of human resources, I think that trends in recruitment have started changing not just in our industry, but in society as a whole. Under these circumstances, we have changed our policy for the recruitment of employees, especially new graduates, to a quality-focused recruitment approach.

For the development of employees, we implemented a program to provide all employees and 1,000 engineers with training to improve skills in AI and cloud services to raise the skill levels of the entire labor force. I have said that we will reflect the outcome of this development initiative in the sales of the current fiscal year and we are set to put this into practice. However, the impact of the new coronavirus crisis has prevented us in getting off to a good start in terms of gaining new projects.

For research and development of new technologies, this is what we have been doing as a growth strategy for a long time. In this industry, I believe that any company that does not try new things will end up losing sales and marketshare. Therefore, we have been focusing on attracting new customers and increasing our marketshare among existing customers by doing new things before anyone else.

Looking at the results of the previous fiscal year, we succeeded in receiving an order of an AI-related project directly from a new client, a major automobile manufacturer, in the latter part of the year. This project continues in the current fiscal year. We have made this and other achievements and will continue to make efforts in this field.

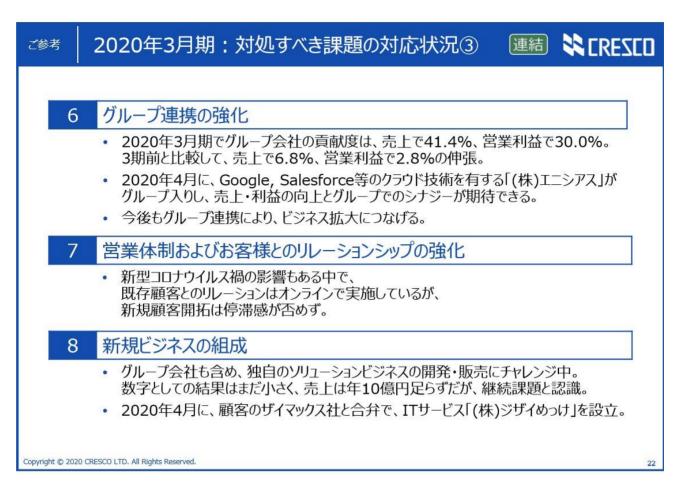
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Now, let's look at how we strengthen the Group collaboration.

I was also asked about how much the Group has contributed to earnings and how much profit was made by the Group. In terms of the degree of contribution by the Group, in the previous fiscal year, the sales of the Group accounted for 41.4% of the total sales, and operating income accounted for 30%. Compared to the figures of three years ago, sales increased by 6.8% and operating income by 2.8% as written in this slide, and we intend to continue our efforts.

In April we acquired a company named Enisias, which has annual sales of about JPY1 billion and engineers specialized in cloud services. I believe that this company will help bring about an increase in the Group's earnings as well as synergy effects within the Group.

The seventh issue is about the need to strengthen our sales structure and relationships with customers. We cannot deny that the impact of the new coronavirus crisis has slowed our efforts to acquire new customers, but we intend to come up with ways to do it online.

Regarding the composition of new businesses, [inaudible] solution business or what we call the subscriptiontype solution business, is still on the order of JPY1 billion per year in scale. We realize the need to increase the ratio of this business substantially and will continue to make efforts toward this end.

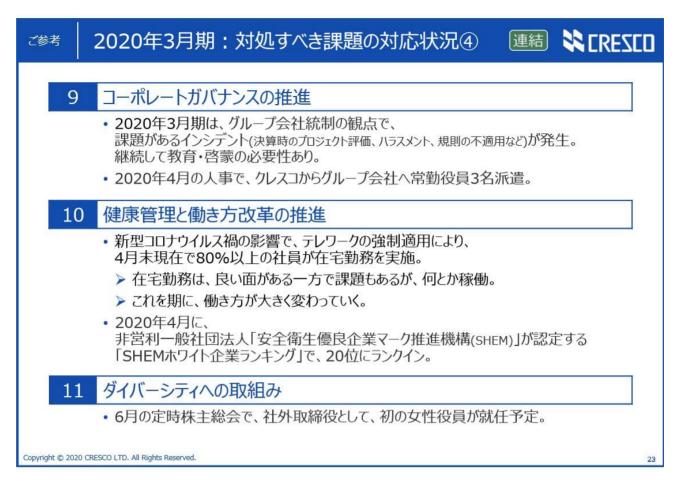
In addition, there is a business that we have engaged in that is a bit different from our main line of business. Specifically, since April of this year, we have established an IT-service company called ZXY MEQQE Corporation with our client Xymax, a company specialized in real-estate management service, by investing and holding a stake of 34% in the joint venture and loaning three employees from the Group to the company. I think that this will be an investment at the beginning, but I hope that this company will grow in three years' time.

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Then, about the issue of promoting corporate governance, we have seen the sporadic occurrence of incidents related to corporate governance that need to be addressed as the number of Group companies increase. Under these circumstances, I believe we need to provide education and promote awareness about corporate governance on an ongoing basis.

Now, let's look at the 10th issue of promoting health management and work-style reform. As I said earlier, we have been proceeding with efforts to expand remote work. In April 2020, the SHEM, an affiliate organization of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to promote the Safety and Health Superior Enterprise Mark that issues the Kurumin certification and certifies the companies with health-centered management practices, issued the Good-Standing Company Ranking in which our company was ranked as 20th in the country and the top company in the IT business segment. I don't know which parts of our company were evaluated so highly but, at any rate, I am very happy with the rating.

Furthermore, in terms of initiatives for diversity, there was no female executive officer in our Group, but there will be a female director, an outside director, from this June.

This is all for my briefing. I would like to move on to the question-and-answer session. Thank you very much.

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Question & Answer

Moderator: Now, we are starting the question-and-answer session. I have questions that we have received from our shareholders. I will read the questions out loud.

The first question: "The operating income margin declined slightly in the fourth quarter. I want to know what factors led to this decline?"

Nemoto: The biggest factor is, as I mentioned briefly earlier, that there was a considerable number of projects that turned out to be unprofitable whose effects continued until the fourth quarter, resulting in a substantial increase in provisions and a substantial reduction in costs in the fourth quarter. Another factor is that the issue of the new coronavirus affected, albeit slightly, the performance in March at the end of the fiscal year, but I don't think that the effect was that big. That is about what I can say.

Moderator: Thank you. I'll read another question: "The stat of orders received has been favorable. I just want to know whether the orders have been strong in both software development and embedded software businesses."

Please answer this question.

Nemoto: The order status varies depending on the client's business segment. As I mentioned earlier, the air transportation and travel industries are our major customers, but we are facing a very tough situation with the orders we receive from them because their main businesses are facing serious challenges. There have been projects that were once received being discontinued or suspended.

As I mentioned earlier, such developments have been seen in some of our clients in human resources business, such as temporary-staffing companies as well as in real-estate business. There are no major developments like this in the financial and embedded-manufacturing industries and we have been receiving orders in line with our plan.

Moderator: Thank you. Would you like to take another question? I will read one more: "The question concerns what your thoughts are for M&A. I think there will be more opportunities for acquisitions amid an increase in the number of companies with tight financial positions. Do you have any plans to accelerate your move to acquire such companies?"

Please answer this question.

Nemoto: About merger and acquisition; I will consider acquiring only carefully selected companies. The value of goodwill has been considerably high for a long time. So, with the value of goodwill dropping, I would surely be interested in buying the really good companies, the carefully selected ones. If I found such companies, I would consider acquiring them.

I am also interested in knowing about how much opportunities for M&A will come up. If any of you knows any company interested in M&A, I would be glad to hear about it. I look forward to hearing from you in this matter. Thank you in advance.

Moderator: Thank you. Would you like to take another question? President Nemoto, is there anything else you would like to add?

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Nemoto: Concerning the question about M&A, there had been a few companies putting up for M&A in which we were interested. The deals didn't materialize because we lost in the competition or the target company changed its mind. So, the materialization rate has been rather low.

The prices and the value of goodwill had been quite high up to the previous fiscal year. As the questioner said, I feel that the period of opportunity is now on the way. However, as in the previous years, it would be difficult to try to win an M&A deal by raising the value goodwill and competing with other bidders. The reason why I feel this way is that there is still uncertainty in the future. Despite that, we plan to continue pursuing M&A deals.

Moderator: Thank you. Are there any more questions? It seems that there are no more questions. I will finish today's briefing. Thank you very much, President Nemoto.

Nemoto: Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you all very much for watching today's briefing session.

[END]

Document Notes

- 1. Portions of the document where the audio is unclear are marked as follows: [Inaudible].
- 2. This document has been translated by SCRIPTS Asia.

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