



May 27, 2009 07:21 AM Eastern Daylight Time

M&A Property Investors Launches New Private Equity Real Estate Investment Project

LUGANO, Switzerland--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--M&A Property Investors, the Real Estate and Property division of M&A Investors S.A., a regulated joint-stock Swiss financial firm, has regrouped under the leadership of Swiss-Italian financier Marc E. Cottino to invest in European and other real estate assets.

Mr Cottino was previously with Millenium Capital, a private equity real estate investment company based in Luxembourg that he co-founded in 1999. As Millenium's Investment Strategist, he was directly involved in successfully sourcing 22 real estate projects across Europe totalling €320 million of equity capital investments.

In July 2007 Mr Cottino left the Millenium group and joined M&A Investors to manage the firm's real estate activities consisting of commercial and residential properties in Europe.

Under Mr Cottino's leadership, a team of seven experienced analysts and other investment professionals has been put into place in Lugano, Geneva and Paris to target the acquisition of value-added, opportunistic and distressed real estate projects.

The firm has begun approaching institutional and other qualified investors, including high net worth individuals, in order to raise €100 million for a private equity real estate SICAV-SIF based in Luxembourg, with a first closing of €50 million expected in late 2009.

The new fund will seek to take advantage of the current weakness in the real estate sector by investing in selected opportunities that fall "below the radar screen" of larger funds; typically investments ranging between €10 million and €20 million. The team will look for properties where value can be added by injecting both capital and development or operational expertise.

About sixty percent of the fund will be invested in distressed or non-performing real estate and property investments in Central and Eastern Europe, primarily residential and commercial, while the remainder will be invested in value-added developments coupled with renewable energy (solar, wind) projects in North Africa, particularly in Morocco where domestic demand for new residential property remains high. A project of €5 million has already been identified as a first initial investment by the fund.

"Although Eastern European economies have been hard hit by the global crisis, some local markets offer tremendous potential for opportunistic real-estate investing in a bottom-cycle timing within a medium-term investment time frame," Mr Cottino commented. "In particular, our analysts have detected highly attractive distressed assets launched at high value by international developers in late 2006-2007 when market started to become saturated. Many of them are now distressed or bankrupt. These assets, located in capital and other major cities such as Bratislava, Budapest, and Brno, can be acquired at bargain prices with a strategy of a 3 to 4-year holding period and targeted returns of more than 20%."

Mr Cottino has nearly 32 years experience in the international financial industry, having worked for major firms in London, Paris, Madrid and Lugano in areas including capital markets, portfolio management and project finance. He has first-hand knowledge of all facets of real estate investment and ownership, including sourcing, acquisition, development, finance, dispositions, leasing and management.

About M&A PROPERTY INVESTORS

As the Real Estate and Property division of M&A Investors S.A., a Swiss financial firm, M&A Property Investors focuses on tangible investments in the global real estate industry by sourcing and developing selected niche opportunities that offer superior returns in exchange for an acceptable level of risk, low leverage effect and clear way-out strategy.

The firm has a proved track-record in carrying out successful investments in European Real Estate by structuring and managing *Special Purpose Vehicle* (SPV), thanks to a wide network of partners, advisors and consultants with solid knowledge of the local property markets across Central and Eastern Europe.