Accounting Standard (AS) 5
(revised 1997)

Net Profit or Loss for the Period, Prior Period Items and Changes in Accounting Policies

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*(This Accounting Standard includes paragraphs set in **bold italic** type and plain type, which have equal authority. Paragraphs in bold italic type indicate the main principles. This Accounting Standard should be read in the context of its objective and the Preface to the Statements of Accounting Standards[1].)*

The following is the text of the revised Accounting Standard (AS) 5, 'Net Profit or Loss for the Period, Prior Period Items and Changes in Accounting Policies', issued by the Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

This revised standard comes into effect in respect of accounting periods commencing on or after 1.4.1996 and is mandatory in nature.[2] It is clarified that in respect of accounting periods commencing on a date prior to 1.4.1996, Accounting Standard 5 as originally issued in November, 1982 (and subsequently made mandatory) will apply.

Objective

The objective of this Statement is to prescribe the classification and disclosure of certain items in the statement of profit and loss so that all enterprises

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* A limited revision was made in 2001, pursuant to which paragraph 33 has been added in this standard (see footnote 3). The Standard was originally issued in November 1982 and was titled 'Prior Period and Extraordinary Items and Changes in Accounting Policies'.

[1] Attention is specifically drawn to paragraph 4.3 of the Preface, according to which Accounting Standards are intended to apply only to items which are material.

[2] Reference may be made to the section titled 'Announcements of the Council regarding status of various documents issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India' appearing at the beginning of this Compendium for a detailed discussion on the implications of the mandatory status of an accounting standard.

prepare and present such a statement on a uniform basis. This enhances the comparability of the financial statements of an enterprise over time and with the financial statements of other enterprises. Accordingly, this Statement requires the classification and disclosure of extraordinary and prior period items, and the disclosure of certain items within profit or loss from ordinary activities. It also specifies the accounting treatment for changes in accounting estimates and the disclosures to be made in the financial statements regarding changes in accounting policies.

Scope

1. This Statement should be applied by an enterprise in presenting profit or loss from ordinary activities, extraordinary items and prior period items in the statement of profit and loss, in accounting for changes in accounting estimates, and in disclosure of changes in accounting policies.

2. This Statement deals with, among other matters, the disclosure of certain items of net profit or loss for the period. These disclosures are made in addition to any other disclosures required by other Accounting Standards.

3. This Statement does not deal with the tax implications of extraordinary items, prior period items, changes in accounting estimates, and changes in accounting policies for which appropriate adjustments will have to be made depending on the circumstances.

Definitions

4. The following terms are used in this Statement with the meanings specified:

***Ordinary activities** are any activities which are undertaken by an enterprise as part of its business and such related activities in which the enterprise engages in furtherance of, incidental to, or arising from, these activities.*

***Extraordinary items** are income or expenses that arise from events or transactions that are clearly distinct from the ordinary activities of the enterprise and, therefore, are not expected to recur frequently or regularly.*

***Prior period items** are income or expenses which arise in the current period*

as a result of errors or omissions in the preparation of the financial statements of one or more prior periods.

Accounting policies** are the specific accounting principles and the methods of applying those principles adopted by an enterprise in the preparation and presentation of financial statements.

Net Profit or Loss for the Period

5. All items of income and expense which are recognised in a period should be included in the determination of net profit or loss for the period unless an Accounting Standard requires or permits otherwise.

6. Normally, all items of income and expense which are recognised in a period are included in the determination of the net profit or loss for the period. This includes extraordinary items and the effects of changes in accounting estimates.

7. The net profit or loss for the period comprises the following components, each of which should be disclosed on the face of the statement of profit and loss:

(a) profit or loss from ordinary activities; and

(b) extraordinary items.

Extraordinary Items

8. Extraordinary items should be disclosed in the statement of profit and loss as a part of net profit or loss for the period. The nature and the amount of each extraordinary item should be separately disclosed in the statement of profit and loss in a manner that its impact on current profit or loss can be perceived.

9. Virtually all items of income and expense included in the determination of net profit or loss for the period arise in the course of the ordinary activities of the enterprise. Therefore, only on rare occasions does an event or transaction give rise to an extraordinary item.

10. Whether an event or transaction is clearly distinct from the ordinary activities of the enterprise is determined by the nature of the event or transaction

in relation to the business ordinarily carried on by the enterprise rather than by the frequency with which such events are expected to occur. Therefore, an event or transaction may be extraordinary for one enterprise but not so for another enterprise because of the differences between their respective ordinary activities. For example, losses sustained as a result of an earthquake may qualify as an extraordinary item for many enterprises. However, claims from policyholders arising from an earthquake do not qualify as an extraordinary item for an insurance enterprise that insures against such risks.

11. Examples of events or transactions that generally give rise to extraordinary items for most enterprises are:

– attachment of property of the enterprise; or

– an earthquake.

Profit or Loss from Ordinary Activities

12. When items of income and expense within profit or loss from ordinary activities are of such size, nature or incidence that their disclosure is relevant to explain the performance of the enterprise for the period, the nature and amount of such items should be disclosed separately.

13. Although the items of income and expense described in paragraph 12 are not extraordinary items, the nature and amount of such items may be relevant to users of financial statements in understanding the financial position and performance of an enterprise and in making projections about financial position and performance. Disclosure of such information is sometimes made in the notes to the financial statements.

14. Circumstances which may give rise to the separate disclosure of items of income and expense in accordance with paragraph 12 include:

(a) the write-down of inventories to net realisable value as well as the reversal of such write-downs;

(b) a restructuring of the activities of an enterprise and the reversal of any provisions for the costs of restructuring;

(c) disposals of items of fixed assets;

(d) disposals of long-term investments;

(e) legislative changes having retrospective application;

(f) litigation settlements; and

(g) other reversals of provisions.

Prior Period Items

15. The nature and amount of prior period items should be separately disclosed in the statement of profit and loss in a manner that their impact on the current profit or loss can be perceived.

16. The term 'prior period items', as defined in this Statement, refers only to income or expenses which arise in the current period as a result of errors or omissions in the preparation of the financial statements of one or more prior periods. The term does not include other adjustments necessitated by circumstances, which though related to prior periods, are determined in the current period, e.g., arrears payable to workers as a result of revision of wages with retrospective effect during the current period.

17. Errors in the preparation of the financial statements of one or more prior periods may be discovered in the current period. Errors may occur as a result of mathematical mistakes, mistakes in applying accounting policies, misinterpretation of facts, or oversight.

18. Prior period items are generally infrequent in nature and can be distinguished from changes in accounting estimates. Accounting estimates by their nature are approximations that may need revision as additional information becomes known. For example, income or expense recognised on the outcome of a contingency which previously could not be estimated reliably does not constitute a prior period item.

19. Prior period items are normally included in the determination of net profit or loss for the current period. An alternative approach is to show such items in the statement of profit and loss after determination of current net profit or loss. In either case, the objective is to indicate the effect of such items on the current profit or loss.

Changes in Accounting Estimates

20. As a result of the uncertainties inherent in business activities, many financial statement items cannot be measured with precision but can only be estimated. The estimation process involves judgments based on the latest information available. Estimates may be required, for example, of bad debts, inventory obsolescence or the useful lives of depreciable assets. The use of reasonable estimates is an essential part of the preparation of financial statements and does not undermine their reliability.

21. An estimate may have to be revised if changes occur regarding the circumstances on which the estimate was based, or as a result of new information, more experience or subsequent developments. The revision of the estimate, by its nature, does not bring the adjustment within the definitions of an extraordinary item or a prior period item.

22. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between a change in an accounting policy and a change in an accounting estimate. In such cases, the change is treated as a change in an accounting estimate, with appropriate disclosure.

23. The effect of a change in an accounting estimate should be included in the determination of net profit or loss in:

(a) the period of the change, if the change affects the period only; or

(b) the period of the change and future periods, if the change affects both.

24. A change in an accounting estimate may affect the current period only or both the current period and future periods. For example, a change in the estimate of the amount of bad debts is recognised immediately and therefore affects only the current period. However, a change in the estimated useful life of a depreciable asset affects the depreciation in the current period and in each period during the remaining useful life of the asset. In both cases, the effect of the change relating to the current period is recognised as income or expense in the current period. The effect, if any, on future periods, is recognised in future periods.

25. The effect of a change in an accounting estimate should be classified using the same classification in the statement of profit and loss as was used previously for the estimate.

26. To ensure the comparability of financial statements of different periods, the effect of a change in an accounting estimate which was previously included in the profit or loss from ordinary activities is included in that component of net profit or loss. The effect of a change in an accounting estimate that was previously included as an extraordinary item is reported as an extraordinary item.

27. The nature and amount of a change in an accounting estimate which has a material effect in the current period, or which is expected to have a material effect in subsequent periods, should be disclosed. If it is impracticable to quantify the amount, this fact should be disclosed.

Changes in Accounting Policies

28. Users need to be able to compare the financial statements of an enterprise over a period of time in order to identify trends in its financial position, performance and cash flows. Therefore, the same accounting policies are normally adopted for similar events or transactions in each period.

29. A change in an accounting policy should be made only if the adoption of a different accounting policy is required by statute or for compliance with an accounting standard or if it is considered that the change would result in a more appropriate presentation of the financial statements of the enterprise.

30. A more appropriate presentation of events or transactions in the financial statements occurs when the new accounting policy results in more relevant or reliable information about the financial position, performance or cash flows of the enterprise.

31. The following are not changes in accounting policies :

(a) the adoption of an accounting policy for events or transactions that differ in substance from previously occurring events or transactions, e.g., introduction of a formal retirement gratuity scheme by an employer in place of ad hoc ex-gratia payments to employees on retirement; and

(b) the adoption of a new accounting policy for events or transactions which did not occur previously or that were immaterial.

32. Any change in an accounting policy which has a material effect should be disclosed. The impact of, and the adjustments resulting from, such change, if material, should be shown in the financial statements of the period in which such change is made, to reflect the effect of such change. Where the effect of such change is not ascertainable, wholly or in part, the fact should be indicated. If a change is made in the accounting policies which has no material effect on the financial statements for the current period but which is reasonably expected to have a material effect in later periods, the fact of such change should be appropriately disclosed in the period in which the change is adopted.

33. A change in accounting policy consequent upon the adoption of an Accounting Standard should be accounted for in accordance with the specific transitional provisions, if any, contained in that Accounting Standard. However, disclosures required by paragraph 32 of this Statement should be made unless the transitional provisions of any other Accounting Standard require alternative disclosures in this regard.[3]

[3] As a limited revision to AS 5, the Council of the Institute decided to add this paragraph in AS 5 in 2001. This revision comes into effect in respect of accounting periods commencing on or after 1.4.2001 (see 'The Chartered Accountant', September 2001, pp. 342).