



Press release



**For Immediate Release: 7am (GMT)  
Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2000**

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## **Merrill Lynch HSBC Launches Online Investment and Banking Service**

**UK announces equity research offer in advance of main launch  
in Q1**

**Canadian service starts today; Australia to follow on 18 December**

**London**, 5 December – Merrill Lynch HSBC, the global online investment services and banking company, today announced the launch of its equity research offer for UK private investors and the start of the company's full self-directed service in Canada. The company also said it will begin its operations in Australia on 18 December. The global brand of the service will be known as Merrill Lynch HSBC.

In the UK, the research service will give free access to equity research from Merrill Lynch and HSBC's award-winning global teams of analysts at the company's website: **[www.mlhsbc.com](http://www.mlhsbc.com)**. It will be available to anyone resident in the UK registering with the website for a period of up to 90 days. The service has been developed in conjunction with Multex.com, a leading financial e-marketplace company.

The launch today in Canada, and on 18 December in Australia, follows the transfer to Merrill Lynch HSBC in these countries of HSBC's InvestDirect operations. In the UK, subject to regulatory approval, the full self-directed service will be launched to the public by the end of the first quarter 2001. By 2005 it is anticipated that the Merrill Lynch HSBC service will be fully operational in up to 20 countries worldwide.

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“The start of the UK investment research service today and the acceleration of the Canadian and Australian launches are significant steps forward in the rollout of our service around the world,” said **Edward L Goldberg**, chief executive officer of Merrill Lynch HSBC. “Investment research is just one of the many powerful tools we will make available to self-directed investors to help them to invest with intelligence.”

As announced earlier this year the service will offer customers a comprehensive and innovative range of online investment and banking services for self-directed investors who want to make informed investment decisions for themselves. Clients will have access to a physical network of investment centres in key locations and telephone services through client service centres. Dedicated staff will be available to provide client service and support.

Registered users of the equity research facility in the UK will have access to:

- Detailed research reports and “morning meeting notes” from Merrill Lynch and HSBC on specific companies, sectors and subjects, featuring analyst opinions and earnings estimates.
- Global economic and strategy research from some of the world’s leading economists and strategists.
- Market data and news – showing share prices, charts, most actively traded shares, complete with company and market news briefs.
- An innovative Learning Centre featuring Knowledge Bytes™ on the value of investment research, to help investors make more informed investment decisions and understand the key concepts and measurements professional analysts use.

Clients will also be able to follow the progress of up to 10 shares in a portfolio tracker and link to research reports, market data, charts and news on each company selected.

“Content, innovation and intelligence will be the hallmarks of **mlhsbc.com**,” said **Nathan Moss**, chief operating officer of Merrill Lynch HSBC. “We aim to make the site one of the most comprehensive and ‘easy to use’ websites in the world.”

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In Canada, beginning today, the company will be offering the Merrill Lynch HSBC Investment Access Portfolio™ (IAP™) account. A minimum investment level of C\$5,000 will be required to open a new account. Clients will have debit and cheque book privileges attached to their IAP™ account, providing them with immediate access to debit and cash holding transactions. Clients will also be able to buy US, Canadian and Hong Kong listed equities, in addition to over ten other markets and will have access to a fund supermarket containing more than 40 fund families.

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**Parent Company Information:**

Headquartered in London, HSBC is one of the largest financial services organisations in the world, with assets of US\$580 billion at 30 June 2000. Serving 25 million customers, HSBC's international network comprises some 6,000 offices in 81 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa. Further information on HSBC is available at [www.hsbc.com](http://www.hsbc.com).

Merrill Lynch is one of the world's leading financial management and advisory companies with offices in 44 countries and total client assets of \$1.8 trillion. As an investment bank, it is the top global underwriter and market maker of debt and equity securities and a leading strategic advisor to corporations, governments, institutions, and individuals worldwide. Through Merrill Lynch Investment Managers, the company is one of the world's largest managers of financial assets. For more information on Merrill Lynch, go to [www.ml.com](http://www.ml.com).

The foregoing statements may include forward-looking information subject to risks, uncertainties and other factors that could materially affect actual results. These are described in Merrill Lynch's 1999 Annual Report on Form 10-K, and in the 1999 Annual Report on Form 20-F of HSBC Holdings plc, which are available at the SEC's website, [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov).

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