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Asia Pacific Equity Research

23 March 2015

Neutral

Price: HK\$6.20 20 Mar 2015

Price Target: HK\$5.70
PT End Date: 31 Dec 2015

Sinopec Corp - H (386 HK)

Energy/materials strategic shift; Chemicals reform potential; Strong nonfuels marketing growth

Sinopec's management update outlined some subtle changes to its long term strategy, in our view. The company is positioning itself along the energy value chain, moving gradually away from oil/gas to alternative energy sources as well as focusing on efficiency/upgrading growth, although no specific plan was provided. Sinopec remains committed to further reform – we see potential for reform in the chemicals business, although domestic regulatory hurdles means spin-offs at the listco level are more challenging vs. parent level. Non-fuels growth in marketing seems to be progressing strongly which may be a prelude to a possible IPO from 2016 (not mentioned at briefing) and management seems committed to a higher payout level albeit perhaps not 50%.

- Moving up the cost curve? Focusing on the value chain: Sinopec has stated its strategic direction to move from petroleum/chemicals toward energy/materials, which mirrors the 'Made in China 2025' strategy, which aims to improve efficiency and upgrade growth (e.g. specialty chemicals) which links into manufacturing (e.g. auto/airspace sectors). Sinopec's business will continue to be related to oil/gas, but will more focus on alternative/new energy which feels like a move up the energy cost curve, in our view.
- Further reforms; regulatory hurdles: Sinopec aims to continue with its market based approach at listco/parent level. The company acknowledged that with the listco under China securities regulation, splitting up segments (e.g. chemicals, lubricants, catalysts and water treatment) still needs a regulatory green light.
- Maintaining high payout; no commitment to 50%: Sinopec marketing raised Rmb105bn this quarter and the company stated that it does not want to hold too much cash. Mr Fu, Chairman/CEO stated that the company "will try its best to maintain or grow payout" but would not commit to sustaining a 50% payout.
- No guidance on opex; budget based on US\$60/bl: Sinopec expects further opex cuts this year but no specific targets were outlined. In the upstream, oil production cut mainly relates to cutting high cost wells where mature well cost is >US\$60/bl. Operational targets are based on US\$60/bl in FY15.
- Chinese oil demand to plateau soon? Sinopec sees continued oil demand growth in China, but a deceleration in the pace of growth in the medium term. The company expects diesel demand to peak in 2017 (with gasoline peaking in 2025).
- Lower reserve life oil price related; minor impairments: Sinopec's proven reserves decline seems to mainly relate to the lower oil prices and the shelving of high cost fields, although the company was keen to highlight additions have been largely driven by natural gas (including Fuling). Impairment on reserves were small (Rmb2.5bn in FY14 mainly on domestic fields) as good cost control measures and a lift in the oil levy threshold have meant a good profitability outlook for most upstream assets.
- Strong non-fuels growth in retail; more infrastructure required: Non-fuels marketing revenue growth seems strong revenue growth for January/February is already up 60% y/y. New products at the retail level e.g. auto, financial, insurance services will grow as infrastructure is built out this year. There was no comment on the potential for retail IPO this year.
- **Continued focus on gas; Fuling progressing well:** Fuling project seems to be well on track (capex was Rmb12bn in FY14 and spending target is Rmb9bn this year with output at 3.5bcm/yr and capacity at 5bcm/yr).

See details from the release here.

Investment Thesis

Sinopec is the second-largest oil company in China. It is integrated with E&P, R&M and chemicals. In 2013, crude production was 0.9mn BOPD and natural gas 0.30mn BOPD, refining throughout was 4.9mn BOPD, ethylene production 10mn tonnes. Sinopec has SEC proven reserves of 4.4bn BOE (70%+ is crude). Our neutral view of Sinopec-H based on the following:

- Headwinds from the global oil market; downstream challenged With crude oil markets pressured we believe that the oil focused Sinopec will be in a period of lackluster returns; additionally, the downstream segment looks to be burdened in 1H15 (1Q15 theoretical China GRMs beginning in negative territory; chemicals look on track to continue to be a loss-making business).
- Natural gas upside Strong natural gas production growth as well as further natural gas price hikes should support some upstream profitability.
- Lack of positive catalysts in the medium term Post announcing its USD17.5bn marketing stake sale, we see the pace of reform at Sinopec slowing down as the company digests the stake sale (focus on IPO) and previous purchases (international E&P assets, Yanbu refinery); additionally, we have increasingly limited visibility on use of the proceeds of the stake sale in the medium term.

Valuation

Our Dec-15 PT of HK\$6.0 is based on our DCF valuation of the different segments, using a WACC of 10.5% and a terminal growth rate of 3%.

Risks to Rating and Price Target

Upside and downside risks to our rating and price target include: lower/higher domestic oil product demand; a collapse/improvement in chemicals profitability from weaker/higher margins; and lower-/higher-than-expected incremental refining margins upside from fuel spec reform.

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Date	Rating	Share Price (HK\$)	Price Target (HK \$)
31-May-07	OW	7.95	9.00
27-Aug-07	OW	8.47	11.80
31-Mar-08	OW	6.82	8.00
27-Jun-08	UW	7.35	6.60
30-Oct-08	N	4.41	6.00
27-Feb-09	OW	4.09	5.50
19-May-09	OW	6.14	7.00
18-Aug-09	OW	6.47	8.50
06-Apr-11	OW	8.02	9.40
13-May-12	OW	7.55	9.00
29-Oct-12	OW	8.25	9.50
06-May-13	NR	8.45	
02-Jul-13	OW	5.46	7.50
03-Mar-14	OW	6.75	8.00
11-Jul-14	N	7.24	8.00
09-Nov-14	N	6.43	7.00
18-Jan-15	N	6.06	6.00
23-Mar-15	N	6.07	5.70

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IB clients*	56%	49%	33%
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