

Noble Corp / Switzerland
Form DEF 14A
April 03, 2012
[Table of Contents](#)

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the
Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Filed by the Registrant ☒

Filed by a Party other than the Registrant ☐

Check the appropriate box:

- ☐ Preliminary Proxy Statement
- ☐ **Confidential, for Use of the Commission Only** (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2))
- ☒ Definitive Proxy Statement
- ☐ Definitive Additional Materials
- ☐ Soliciting Material under Rule 14a-12

NOBLE CORPORATION
(Name of registrant as specified in its charter)

(Name of person(s) filing proxy statement, if other than the registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (Check the appropriate box):

- ☒ No fee required.
- ☐ Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 14a-6(i)(4) and 0-11.

(1) Title of each class of securities to which transaction applies:

Edgar Filing: Noble Corp / Switzerland - Form DEF 14A

- (2) Aggregate number of securities to which transaction applies:

- (3) Per unit price or other underlying value of transaction computed pursuant to Exchange Act Rule 0-11 (set forth the amount on which the filing fee is calculated and state how it was determined):

- (4) Proposed maximum aggregate value of transaction:

- (5) Total fee paid:

- .. Fee paid previously with preliminary materials.

- .. Check box if any part of the fee is offset as provided by Exchange Act Rule 0-11(a)(2) and identify the filing for which the offsetting fee was paid previously. Identify the previous filing by registration statement number, or the Form or Schedule and the date of its filing.

- (1) Amount Previously Paid:

- (2) Form, Schedule or Registration Statement No.:

- (3) Filing Party:

- (4) Date Filed:

Table of Contents

NOBLE CORPORATION

Dorfstrasse 19A

6340 Baar

Zug, Switzerland

INVITATION TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

To Be Held On April 27, 2012

To the Shareholders of Noble Corporation:

The annual general meeting of shareholders of Noble Corporation, a Swiss corporation (the "Company"), will be held on April 27, 2012, at 3:00 p.m., local time, at the Parkhotel Zug, Industriestrasse 14, Zug, Switzerland.

Agenda Items

(1) Reduction of the Maximum Number of Members of the Board of Directors.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders approve a reduction of the maximum number of members of the Board of Directors from nine members to eight members and the amendment to Article 23 of our Articles of Association accordingly.

(2) Election of Directors.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that the individuals set forth below be re-elected for a three-year term that will expire in 2015:

Julie H. Edwards; and

David W. Williams

(3) Approval of the 2011 Annual Report, the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Company for Fiscal Year 2011 and the Statutory Financial Statements of the Company for Fiscal Year 2011.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders approve the 2011 Annual Report, the consolidated financial statements for fiscal year 2011 and the statutory financial statements for fiscal year 2011.

**(4) Dividend Payment Funded From Capital Contribution Reserve.
Proposal of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders approve (A) the release and allocation of CHF 266,962,521.84, which is equal to approximately USD \$293,011,219.23 using the currency exchange rate as published by the Swiss National Bank on February 21, 2012 (CHF 0.9111/1.0 USD), from the Company's capital contribution reserve to a special reserve account (the Dividend Reserve), (B) a dividend in the amount of USD \$0.52 per share to be distributed out of the Dividend Reserve and paid in

Table of Contents

four installments of USD \$0.13 per share in August 2012, November 2012, February 2013 and May 2013 (in each case subject to the availability of a sufficient amount in the Dividend Reserve) and (C) the automatic re-allocation to the capital contribution reserve of any amount of the Dividend Reserve remaining after payment of the final quarterly installment of the dividend.

(5) Ratification of Appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm for Fiscal Year 2012 and Election of PricewaterhouseCoopers AG as Statutory Auditor.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders ratify the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as the Company's independent registered public accounting firm for fiscal year 2012 and that PricewaterhouseCoopers AG be elected as the Company's statutory auditor pursuant to the Swiss Code of Obligations for a one-year term commencing on the date of the 2012 annual general meeting of shareholders and terminating on the date of the 2013 annual general meeting of shareholders.

(6) Discharge of the Members of the Board of Directors and the Executive Officers for Fiscal Year 2011.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders discharge the members of the Board of Directors and the executive officers from personal liability for fiscal year 2011.

(7) An Advisory Vote on the Company's Executive Compensation.

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders, in an advisory vote, approve the compensation of the Company's named executive officers.

(8) Amendment and Restatement of the Noble Corporation 1991 Stock Option and Restricted Stock Plan (as amended to date, the 1991 Plan).

Proposal of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors proposes that our shareholders approve the amendment and restatement of the 1991 Plan to increase the number of shares that can be issued under the 1991 Plan from 45,100,000 shares to 50,100,000 shares.

Organizational Matters

A copy of the proxy materials, including a proxy card, will be sent to each shareholder registered in the Company's share register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on March 2, 2012. Any additional shareholders who are registered with voting rights in the Company's share register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 or who notify the Company's Corporate Secretary in writing of their acquisition of shares by such time will receive a copy of the proxy materials after April 9, 2012. Shareholders who are not registered in the Company's share register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 or who have not notified the Company's Corporate Secretary in writing (mail to Noble Corporation, Attention: Corporate Secretary, Dorfstrasse 19A, 6340 Baar, Zug, Switzerland) of their acquisition of shares by such time will not be entitled to attend, vote or grant proxies to vote at, the 2012 annual general meeting. No shareholder will be entered in or removed from the Company's share register as a shareholder with voting rights between the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 and the opening of business, U.S. Eastern time, on the day following the annual general meeting. Computershare Trust Company, N.A., as agent, which maintains the Company's share register, will, however, continue to register transfers of Noble Corporation shares in the share register in its capacity as transfer agent during this period.

Table of Contents

Shareholders who are registered with voting rights in the Company's share register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 or who have notified the Company's Corporate Secretary in writing of their acquisition of shares by such time (and who have had their notice properly accepted by the Corporate Secretary) have the right to attend the annual general meeting and vote their shares, or may grant a proxy to vote on each of the proposals in this invitation and any other matter properly presented at the meeting for consideration to either the Company or the independent representative, Mr. Christian Koller, Gloor & Sieger, by marking the proxy card appropriately, executing it in the space provided, dating it and returning it prior to close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 26, 2012 either to:

Noble Corporation

c/o MacKenzie Partners, Inc.

Corporate Election Services

P.O. Box 3230

Pittsburgh, PA 15230-9404

or, if granting a proxy to the independent representative:

Mr. Christian Koller

c/o Gloor & Sieger

Utoquai 37

P.O. Box 581

CH 8024 Zurich, Switzerland

Shares of holders who are registered with voting rights in the Company's register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 or who have notified the Company's Corporate Secretary in writing of their acquisition of shares by such time (and who have had their notice properly accepted by the Corporate Secretary) and who have timely submitted a properly executed proxy card and specifically indicated their votes will be voted as indicated. The Company or the independent representative, as applicable, will vote shares of holders with voting rights who have timely submitted a properly executed proxy card and have not specifically indicated their votes (irrespective of whether a proxy has been granted to the Company or the independent representative) in the manner recommended by the Board of Directors.

If any other matters are properly presented at the meeting for consideration, the Company and the independent representative, as applicable, will vote on these matters in the manner recommended by the Board of Directors.

Shareholders who hold their shares in the name of a bank, broker or other nominee should follow the instructions provided by their bank, broker or nominee when voting their shares. Shareholders who hold their shares in the name of a bank, broker or other nominee and wish to vote in person at the meeting must obtain a valid proxy from the organization that holds their shares.

We may accept a proxy by any form of communication permitted by Swiss law and our Articles of Association.

Please note that shareholders attending the annual general meeting in person or by proxy are required to show their proxy card and proper identification on the day of the annual general meeting. In order to determine attendance correctly, any shareholder leaving the annual general meeting early or temporarily is requested to present such shareholder's proxy card and proper identification upon exit.

Proxy Holders of Deposited Shares

Institutions subject to the Swiss Federal Law on Banks and Savings Banks as well as professional asset managers who hold proxies for beneficial owners who did not grant proxies to the Company or the independent representative are kindly asked to inform the Company of the number and par value of the shares they represent as soon as possible, but no later than April 27, 2012, 2:00 p.m., Zug time, at the admission

desk for the annual general meeting.

Table of Contents

Annual Report, Consolidated Financial Statements

A copy of the 2011 Annual Report of the Company, including the consolidated financial statements for fiscal year 2011, the statutory financial statements for fiscal year 2011 and the audit reports on such statements, are available for physical inspection at the Company's registered office at Dorfstrasse 19A, 6340 Baar, Zug, Switzerland. Copies of these materials may be obtained without charge by contacting Investor Relations at our offices at Dorfstrasse 19A, 6340 Baar, Zug, Switzerland, telephone number 41 (41) 761-6555.

Your vote is important. All shareholders are cordially invited to attend the meeting. *We urge you, whether or not you plan to attend the meeting, to submit your proxy by completing, signing, dating and mailing the enclosed proxy or voting instruction card in the postage-paid envelope provided.*

By Order of the Board of Directors

Julie J. Robertson

Secretary

Baar, Switzerland

April 3, 2012

**IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING THE AVAILABILITY OF PROXY MATERIALS FOR THE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON APRIL 27, 2012.**

Our proxy statement, 2011 Annual Report and other information about

the annual general meeting are available at

www.noblecorp.com/2012proxymaterials

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
<u>GENERAL</u>	1
<u>BACKGROUND OF THE COMPANY</u>	1
<u>PROXIES AND VOTING INSTRUCTIONS</u>	1
<u>PRESENCE QUORUM</u>	3
<u>VOTES REQUIRED</u>	3
<u>RECORD DATE</u>	4
<u>PROPOSAL 1 REDUCTION OF THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS</u>	5
<u>PROPOSAL 2 ELECTION OF DIRECTORS</u>	6
<u>NOMINEES FOR DIRECTORS</u>	6
<u>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS</u>	8
<u>POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATING TO TRANSACTIONS WITH RELATED PERSONS</u>	13
<u>SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT</u>	15
<u>EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION</u>	17
<u>COMPENSATION DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS</u>	17
<u>COMPENSATION COMMITTEE REPORT</u>	30
<u>SUMMARY COMPENSATION TABLE</u>	31
<u>GRANTS OF PLAN BASED AWARDS</u>	33
<u>OUTSTANDING EQUITY AWARDS AT FISCAL YEAR-END</u>	34
<u>OPTION EXERCISES AND STOCK VESTED</u>	35
<u>PENSION BENEFITS</u>	36
<u>NONQUALIFIED DEFERRED COMPENSATION</u>	38
<u>POTENTIAL PAYMENTS ON TERMINATION OR CHANGE OF CONTROL</u>	39
<u>DIRECTOR COMPENSATION</u>	44
<u>EQUITY COMPENSATION PLAN INFORMATION</u>	46
<u>SECTION 16(a) BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP REPORTING COMPLIANCE</u>	46
<u>REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE</u>	47
<u>AUDITORS</u>	48
<u>PROPOSAL 3 APPROVAL OF THE 2011 ANNUAL REPORT, THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE COMPANY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND THE STATUTORY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE COMPANY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011</u>	49
<u>PROPOSAL 4 DIVIDEND PAYMENT FUNDED FROM CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION RESERVE</u>	50
<u>PROPOSAL 5 APPOINTMENT OF PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LLP AS INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM AND ELECTION OF PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS AG AS STATUTORY AUDITOR</u>	52
<u>PROPOSAL 6 DISCHARGE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011</u>	53
<u>PROPOSAL 7 ADVISORY VOTE ON EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION</u>	54

Edgar Filing: Noble Corp / Switzerland - Form DEF 14A

<u>PROPOSAL 8 APPROVAL OF AMENDED AND RESTATED 1991 PLAN</u>	55
<u>OTHER MATTERS</u>	62
<u>SHAREHOLDER PROPOSALS</u>	62
<u>SOLICITATION OF PROXIES</u>	62
<u>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPANY</u>	62
<u>APPENDIX A</u>	A-1

Table of Contents

NOBLE CORPORATION

Dorfstrasse 19A

6340 Baar

Zug, Switzerland

PROXY STATEMENT

For Annual General Meeting of Shareholders

To Be Held on April 27, 2012

GENERAL

This proxy statement is furnished to shareholders of Noble Corporation, a Swiss company (Noble Switzerland), in connection with the solicitation by our board of directors (Board) of proxies for use at the annual general meeting of shareholders to be held on April 27, 2012 at 3:00 p.m., local time, at the Parkhotel Zug, Industriestrasse 14, Zug, Switzerland, and for the purposes set forth in the accompanying notice. The approximate date of first mailing of this proxy statement and the accompanying proxy or, in the case of participants in the Noble Drilling Corporation 401(k) Savings Plan, voting instruction card is April 3, 2012.

Background of the Company

In March 2009, Noble Corporation, a Cayman Islands company (Noble Cayman), completed a series of transactions pursuant to which Noble Cayman, by way of schemes of arrangement under Cayman Islands law, became a wholly owned subsidiary of Noble Switzerland (the Transaction). In the Transaction, Noble Switzerland issued one of its shares in exchange for each ordinary share of Noble Cayman. In addition, Noble Switzerland issued approximately 15 million of its shares to Noble Cayman for future use to satisfy its obligations to deliver shares in connection with awards granted under its employee benefit plans and other corporate purposes. The Transaction effectively changed the place of incorporation of the publicly traded parent of the Noble group of companies from the Cayman Islands to Switzerland.

References to the Company, we, us, or our for periods before March 27, 2009 include Noble Cayman together with its subsidiaries, unless the context indicates otherwise. References to the Company, we, us or our for periods from and after March 27, 2009 include Noble Switzerland together with its subsidiaries, unless the context indicates otherwise.

Proxies and Voting Instructions

A proxy card is being sent with this proxy statement to each holder of shares registered in the Company s register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on March 2, 2012. In addition, a proxy card will be sent with this proxy statement to each additional holder of shares who is registered with voting rights in the Company s register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 (which is effectively the record date for the meeting) or who notifies the Company s Corporate Secretary in writing of their acquisition of shares by such time. If you are registered as a shareholder in the Company s register as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 or you have notified the Company s Corporate Secretary in writing of your acquisition of shares by such time (and your notice has been properly accepted by the Corporate Secretary), you may grant a proxy to vote on each of the proposals described in this proxy statement and any other matter properly presented at the meeting for consideration to either the Company or the independent representative, Mr. Christian Koller, Gloor & Sieger, by

Table of Contents

marking your proxy card appropriately, executing it in the space provided, dating it and returning it prior to the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 26, 2012 either to:

Noble Corporation

c/o MacKenzie Partners, Inc.

Corporate Election Services

P.O. Box 3230

Pittsburgh, PA 15230-9404

or, if granting a proxy to the independent representative:

Mr. Christian Koller

c/o Gloor & Sieger

Utoquai 37

P.O. Box 581

CH 8024 Zurich, Switzerland

Please sign, date and mail your proxy card in the envelope provided.

If you hold your shares in the name of a bank, broker or other nominee, you should follow the instructions provided by your bank, broker or nominee when voting your shares. In particular, if you hold your shares in street name through The Depository Trust Company (DTC), you should follow the procedures typically applicable to voting of securities beneficially held through DTC because Cede & Co., as nominee of DTC, has been registered with voting rights in the Company's share register with respect to such shares.

Although the Company is organized under Swiss law, the Company is subject to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) proxy requirements and the applicable corporate governance rules of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), where its shares are listed, and has not imposed any restrictions on trading of its shares as a condition of voting at the annual general meeting. In particular, the Company has not imposed any share blocking or similar transfer restrictions of a type that might be associated with voting by holders of bearer shares or American Depositary Receipts and has not issued any bearer shares or American Depositary Receipts.

Under NYSE rules, brokers who hold shares in street name for customers have the authority to vote on routine proposals when they have not received instructions from beneficial owners, but are precluded from exercising their voting discretion for proposals for non-routine matters. Proxies submitted by brokers without instructions from customers for these non-routine matters are referred to as broker non-votes. The following proposals are non-routine matters under NYSE rules: Proposal (1) (Reduction of the Maximum Number of Members of the Board of Directors), Proposal (2) (Election of Directors), Proposal (4) (Dividend Payment Funded From Capital Contribution Reserve), Proposal (7) (Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation), Proposal (8) (Amendment and Restatement of the 1991 Plan).

If you were a holder with voting rights on April 9, 2012 and have timely submitted a properly executed proxy card and specifically indicated your votes, your shares will be voted as indicated. If you were a holder with voting rights on April 9, 2012 and you have timely submitted a properly executed proxy card and have not specifically indicated your votes (irrespective of whether a proxy has been granted to the Company or the independent representative), the Company or the independent representative, as applicable, will vote your shares in the manner recommended by our Board.

There are no other matters that our Board intends to present, or has received proper notice that others will present, at the annual general meeting. If any other matters are properly presented at the meeting for consideration, the Company and the independent representative, as applicable, will vote any proxies submitted to them on these matters in the manner recommended by our Board.

Edgar Filing: Noble Corp / Switzerland - Form DEF 14A

You may revoke your proxy at any time prior to its exercise by:

giving written notice of the revocation to our Corporate Secretary, with respect to proxies granted to the Company, or to the independent representative at the address set forth above, with respect to proxies granted to the independent representative, in each case before April 27, 2012;

- 2 -

Table of Contents

notifying our Corporate Secretary at least two hours before the time the meeting is scheduled to begin, with respect to proxies granted to the Company, or notifying the independent representative at least two hours before the time the meeting is scheduled to begin, with respect to proxies granted to the independent representative, and appearing at the annual general meeting and voting in person; or

properly completing and executing a later-dated proxy and delivering it to our Corporate Secretary or the independent representative, as applicable, at or before the meeting.

If you attend the annual general meeting in person without voting, this will not automatically revoke your proxy. If you revoke your proxy during the meeting, this will not affect any vote previously taken. If you hold shares through someone else, such as a bank, broker or other nominee, and you desire to revoke your proxy, you should follow the instructions provided by your bank, broker or other nominee.

If you were a participant in the Noble Drilling Corporation 401(k) Savings Plan as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on March 2, 2012 or April 9, 2012, you should receive a voting instruction card for shares held in the Plan. You can provide instructions to the plan trustee as to how to vote shares held in the plan by completing, signing, dating and mailing the voting instruction card in the postage-paid envelope.

Presence Quorum

The presence of shareholders, in person or by proxy, holding at least a majority of the total shares entitled to vote at the annual general meeting will constitute a presence quorum for purposes of all proposals except the proposal to reduce the maximum number of members of the Board of Directors (**Agenda Item (1)**), which requires the presence of shareholders, in person or by proxy, holding at least two-thirds of the total shares entitled to vote at the annual general meeting. For all proposals, the presence of shareholders will be counted at the time when the annual general meeting proceeds to business, and abstentions and broker non-votes will be counted as present for purposes of determining whether there is a presence quorum.

Votes Required

Each share is entitled to one vote.

Approval of the proposal to reduce the maximum number of members of the Board of Directors (**Agenda Item (1)**) requires the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the shares entitled to vote at the annual general meeting.

Approval of the proposal to elect the three nominees named in the proxy statement as directors (**Agenda Item (2)**) requires the affirmative vote of a plurality of the votes cast in person or by proxy. The plurality requirement means that the director nominee with the most votes for a board seat is elected to that board seat.

Approval of each of the following proposals requires the affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast on such proposal at the annual general meeting in person or by proxy:

the proposal to approve the 2011 Annual Report, the consolidated financial statements of the Company for fiscal year 2011 and the statutory financial statements of the Company for fiscal year 2011 (**Agenda Item (3)**);

the proposal to pay a dividend funded from capital contribution reserve (**Agenda Item (4)**);

the proposal to ratify the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as the Company's independent registered public accounting firm for 2012 and to elect PricewaterhouseCoopers AG as the Company's statutory auditor for a one-year term (**Agenda Item (5)**);

the proposal to discharge the members of our Board and our executive officers for fiscal year 2011 (**Agenda Item (6)**);

the advisory vote on executive compensation (**Agenda Item (7)**); and

- 3 -

Table of Contents

the proposal to amend and restate the 1991 Plan (**Agenda Item (8)**).

Abstentions and broker non-votes will have no effect on any of the proposals. The votes of any member of our Board or any of our executive officers will not be counted towards the proposal to discharge the members of our Board and our executive officers.

Record Date

Only shareholders of record as of the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 are entitled to notice of, to attend, and to vote or to grant proxies to vote at, the annual general meeting. No shareholder will be entered in or removed from the Company's share register with voting rights between the close of business, U.S. Eastern time, on April 9, 2012 and the opening of business, U.S. Eastern time, on the day following the annual general meeting.

- 4 -

Table of Contents

PROPOSAL 1

REDUCTION OF THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Articles of Association provide that our Board of Directors shall consist of no less than three and no more than nine members. Following the departure of Mr. Leland from our Board as described in Proposal (2) below, our Board has decided to reduce the maximum number of members of our Board from nine members to eight members. After careful consideration regarding the needs of our governance structure, the functioning of our Board, and the availability of candidates for director, our Board determined that it was in the Company's and our shareholders' best interest to reduce the maximum number of members of our Board to eight. Historically, Noble Cayman had a classified Board generally comprised of eight directors. With Mr. Leland's retirement, our Board determined it was appropriate to return to the traditional size. Our Board believes eight directors provide sufficient diversity of experience and background to best serve the Company and our shareholders while maintaining an efficient and productive governance structure. Our Board also recognized that, whether it has eight or nine directors, the same number of directors is required to approve matters by a majority vote. The Board will continue to periodically review the size of the Board.

Upon the reduction of the maximum number of members of our Board of Directors, Article 23 para 1 of our Articles of Association will be amended to read as follows:

Artikel 23: Anzahl Verwaltungsräte

Der Verwaltungsrat besteht aus mindestens drei und höchstens acht Mitgliedern.

Approval of the proposal requires the presence of shareholders, in person or by proxy, holding at least two-thirds of the total shares entitled to vote at the annual general meeting and the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the shares entitled to vote at the annual general meeting

Article 23: Number of Directors

The Board of Directors shall consist of no less than three and no more than eight members.

Recommendation

Our Board unanimously recommends that shareholders vote FOR the reduction of the maximum members of the Board of Directors and the amendment to Article 23 of our Articles of Association accordingly.

Table of Contents

PROPOSAL 2

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Our Articles of Association provide for three classes of directors, with approximately one-third of the directors constituting our Board being elected each year to serve a three-year term. Three directors compose the class whose term expires at the 2012 annual general meeting: Julie H. Edwards, Marc E. Leland and David W. Williams. The nominating and corporate governance committee of our Board has approved, and our Board has unanimously nominated, Ms. Edwards and Mr. Williams for re-election as directors of the Company to serve three-year terms expiring in 2015. The Company's corporate governance guidelines provide that a person is eligible to be elected as a director of the Company until the annual general meeting next succeeding his 72nd birthday. As a result, Mr. Leland, age 73, is not eligible to stand for re-election at the annual general meeting.

The individuals nominated for election at the annual general meeting will be elected by a plurality of the votes cast by the shareholders present in person or by proxy at the meeting. All duly submitted and unrevoked proxies will be voted for the nominees nominated by our Board, except where authorization so to vote is withheld.

Recommendation

Our Board unanimously recommends that shareholders vote FOR the election of its nominees for director.

Information about the individuals nominated for election at the annual general meeting, and the directors whose terms do not expire at the annual general meeting, is presented below. When assessing the qualifications of a particular person to serve as a director, our nominating and corporate governance committee and our Board consider an individual candidate's experience as well as the collective experiences of our Board members taken as a whole. The members of our Board, including the individuals nominated for election, have a variety of experiences and attributes that qualify them to serve on our Board, including accounting, finance and legal experience, extensive senior management experience in the energy industry, including oil and gas and offshore drilling, and experience as directors of other public companies. Certain members also possess valuable historical knowledge of the Company and our industry by virtue of their previous service on our Board.

NOMINEES FOR DIRECTORS

Julie H. Edwards,

age 53, director since 2006

Ms. Edwards served as Senior Vice President of Corporate Development of Southern Union Company from November 2006 to January 2007, and immediately prior to that served as its Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer from July 2005 to November 2006. Southern Union is primarily engaged in the transportation and distribution of natural gas. Prior to joining Southern Union, Ms. Edwards served as Executive Vice President Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer for Frontier Oil Corporation in Houston since 2000. She joined Frontier Oil in 1991 as Vice President Secretary and Treasurer after serving as Vice President of Corporate Finance for Smith Barney, Harris, Upham & Co., Inc., New York and Houston, from 1988 to 1991, after joining the company as an associate in 1985. Ms. Edwards has not held a principal employment since retiring from Southern Union. Ms. Edwards is also a director of ONEOK, Inc. and ONEOK Partners GP, L.L.C. Ms. Edwards served as a director of the NATCO Group, Inc. from 2004 until its merger with Cameron International Corporation in 2009. Ms. Edwards brings to our Board experience in finance and senior management positions for multiple energy companies and experience as a director of several public companies.

David W. Williams,

age 54, director since 2008

Mr. Williams has served as Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Company since January 2, 2008. Mr. Williams served as Senior Vice President Business Development of Noble Drilling Services Inc., an indirect, wholly-owned subsidiary of the Company, from September 2006 to January 2007, as Senior Vice President Operations of Noble Drilling Services Inc. from January to April 2007,

Table of Contents

and as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Company from April 2007 to January 2, 2008. Prior to September 2006, Mr. Williams served for more than five years as Executive Vice President of Diamond Offshore Drilling, Inc., an offshore oil and gas drilling contractor. Mr. Williams brings to our Board extensive experience in senior management positions in the offshore drilling sector and knowledge of the Company and the industry by virtue of his position as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Company.

CLASS WHOSE TERM EXPIRES IN 2013

Michael A. Cawley,

age 64, director since 1985

Mr. Cawley served as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation (the Noble Foundation), from February 1992 until his retirement in January 2012, after serving as Executive Vice President of the Noble Foundation since January 1991. Mr. Cawley also served as a trustee of the Noble Foundation from 1988 until his retirement in January 2012. The Noble Foundation is engaged in agricultural research, education, demonstration and consultation; plant biology and applied biotechnology; and assistance through granting to selected nonprofit organizations. For more than five years prior to 1991, Mr. Cawley was the President of Thompson & Cawley, a professional corporation, attorneys at law; and Mr. Cawley currently serves as Of Counsel to the law firm of Thompson, Cawley, Veazey & Burns, a professional corporation. Mr. Cawley is a director of Noble Energy, Inc. and also serves as a director of several non-profit organizations. Mr. Cawley brings to our Board experience in, and knowledge of, both the drilling industry and broader energy industry and knowledge of the Company by virtue of his 25 years experience as a director of the Company and his other energy industry and legal experience.

Gordon T. Hall,

age 52, director since 2009

Mr. Hall serves as Chairman of the Board of Exterran Holdings, Inc., a natural gas compression and production services company. He previously served as Chairman of the Board of Hanover Compressor Company from May 2005 until its merger with Universal Compression Holdings, Inc. to create Exterran in August 2007. Mr. Hall retired as Managing Director from Credit Suisse, a brokerage services and investment banking firm, where he was employed from 1987 through 2002. While at Credit Suisse, Mr. Hall served as Senior Oil Field Services Analyst and Co-Head of the Global Energy Group. Mr. Hall has not held a principal employment since leaving his position with Credit Suisse. Mr. Hall was a director of Hydril Company, an oil and gas service company specializing in pressure control equipment and premium connections for tubing and casing, until its merger with Tenaris S.A. in May 2007 and was a director of Grant Prideco, Inc., a drilling technology and manufacturing company, until its acquisition by National Oilwell Varco, Inc. in April 2008. Mr. Hall serves as a director of several private companies and several non-profit organizations. Mr. Hall brings to our Board financial and analytical expertise and investment banking experience, with a focus on the energy sector, and experience as a director of multiple public energy companies.

Jack E. Little,

age 73, director since 2000

Mr. Little served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Shell Oil Company, and a member of the Board of Directors and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Shell Exploration & Production Company for more than five years until his retirement in June 1999. Shell Oil Company and its subsidiaries, with extensive operations in the United States, explore, develop, produce, purchase, transport and market crude oil and natural gas; they also purchase, manufacture, transport and market oil and chemical products and provide technical and business services. Mr. Little also served as a director of TXU Corporation from 2001 to 2007 and serves as a Trustee for the Baylor College of Medicine. Mr. Little also serves as a

Table of Contents

trustee of a non-profit organization. Mr. Little brings to our Board extensive experience in the energy industry, specifically in oil and gas exploration and production and related services, and significant executive experience.

CLASS WHOSE TERM EXPIRES IN 2014

Lawrence J. Chazen,

age 71, director since 1994

Mr. Chazen has served since 1977 as Chief Executive Officer of Lawrence J. Chazen, Inc., a California registered investment adviser engaged in providing financial advisory services. Mr. Chazen brings to our Board a strong financial background, knowledge of the drilling industry and a history with the Company as a director for over 15 years.

Jon A. Marshall,

age 60, director since 2009

Mr. Marshall served as President and Chief Operating Officer of Transocean Inc. from November 2007 to May 2008, and immediately prior to that served as Chief Executive Officer of GlobalSantaFe Corporation from May 2003 until November 2007, when GlobalSantaFe merged with Transocean. Transocean is an offshore drilling contractor. Mr. Marshall has not held a principal employment since leaving his position with Transocean. Mr. Marshall is a director of Cobalt International Energy, Inc. and also serves as a director of several private companies and several non-profit organizations. Mr. Marshall brings to our Board experience in executive positions and experience as a director for public offshore drilling companies.

Mary P. Ricciardello,

age 56, director since 2003

Ms. Ricciardello served as Senior Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer of Reliant Energy, Inc. from January 2001 to August 2002, and immediately prior to that served as its Senior Vice President and Comptroller from September 1999 to January 2001 and as its Vice President and Comptroller from 1996 to September 1999. Ms. Ricciardello also served as Senior Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer of Reliant Resources, Inc. from May 2001 to August 2002. Reliant principally provides electricity and energy services to retail and wholesale customers. Ms. Ricciardello's current principal occupation is as a certified public accountant, and she has not held a principal employment since leaving her positions with Reliant Energy, Inc. and Reliant Resources, Inc. in August 2002. Ms. Ricciardello is also a director of Devon Energy Corporation and Midstates Petroleum Company, Inc., an independent exploration and production company. Ms. Ricciardello also serves as a director of several non-profit organizations. Ms. Ricciardello also served as a director of U.S. Concrete, Inc. from 2003 until August 2010. Ms. Ricciardello brings to our Board extensive accounting experience and experience from service on the boards of multiple public companies.

None of the corporations or other organizations in which our non-management directors carried on their respective principal occupations and employments or for which our non-management directors served as directors during the past five years is a parent, subsidiary or other affiliate of the Company.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Independence

Our Board has determined that (a) each of Mr. Cawley, Mr. Chazen, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Hall, Mr. Leland, Mr. Little, Mr. Marshall and Ms. Ricciardello qualifies as an independent director under the NYSE corporate governance rules and (b) each of Mr. Chazen, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Hall and Ms. Ricciardello, constituting all the members of the audit committee, qualifies as independent under Rule 10A-3 of the United States Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act). Independent non-management directors comprise in full the membership of each committee described below under Board Committees and Meetings.

Table of Contents

In order for a director to be considered independent under the NYSE rules, our Board must affirmatively determine that the director has no material relationship with the Company other than in his or her capacity as a director of the Company. The Company's corporate governance guidelines provide that a director will not be independent if, within the preceding three years,

the director was employed by the Company;

an immediate family member of the director was an executive officer of the Company;

the director or an immediate family member of the director received more than \$120,000 per year in direct compensation from the Company, other than director and committee fees and pension or other forms of deferred compensation for prior service (provided such service is not contingent in any way on continued service);

the director was affiliated with or employed by, or an immediate family member of the director was affiliated with or employed in a professional capacity by, a present or former internal or external auditor of the Company;

the director or an immediate family member of the director was employed as an executive officer of another company where any of the Company's present executives serve on that company's compensation committee; or

the director is an executive officer or an employee, or an immediate family member of the director is an executive officer, of a company that made payments to, or received payments from, the Company for property or services in an amount which, in any single fiscal year, exceeded the greater of \$1 million or two percent of such other company's consolidated gross revenues.

The following will not be considered by our Board to be a material relationship that would impair a director's independence: If a director is an executive officer of, or beneficially owns in excess of 10 percent equity interest in, another company

that does business with the Company, and the amount of the annual payments to the Company is less than five percent of the annual consolidated gross revenues of the Company;

that does business with the Company, and the amount of the annual payments by the Company to such other company is less than five percent of the annual consolidated gross revenues of the Company; or

to which the Company was indebted at the end of its last fiscal year in an aggregate amount that is less than five percent of the consolidated assets of the Company.

For relationships not covered by the guidelines in the immediately preceding paragraph, the determination of whether the relationship is material or not, and therefore whether the director would be independent or not, is made by our directors who satisfy the independence guidelines described above. These independence guidelines used by our Board are set forth in our corporate governance guidelines, which are published under the governance section of our website at www.noblecorp.com.

In accordance with the Company's corporate governance guidelines, the non-management directors have chosen a lead director to preside at regularly scheduled executive sessions of our Board held without management present. Mr. Cawley currently serves as lead director.

Board Committees and Meetings

Edgar Filing: Noble Corp / Switzerland - Form DEF 14A

The Company has standing audit, compensation and nominating and corporate governance committees of our Board. Each of these committees operates under a written charter that has been adopted by the respective committee and by our Board. The charters are published under the governance section of the Company's website at www.noblecorp.com and are available in print to any shareholders who request them.

- 9 -

Table of Contents

The current members of the committees, number of meetings held by each committee during 2011, and a description of the functions performed by each committee are set forth below:

Audit Committee (ten meetings). The current members of the audit committee are Mary P. Ricciardello, Chair, Lawrence J. Chazen, Julie H. Edwards and Gordon T. Hall. The primary responsibilities of the audit committee are the appointment, compensation, retention and oversight of the Company's auditors (including review and approval of the terms of engagement and fees), to review with the auditors the Company's financial reports (and other financial information) provided to the SEC and the investing public, to prepare and approve an annual report for inclusion in this proxy statement, and to assist our Board with oversight of the following: integrity of the Company's financial statements; compliance by the Company with standards of business ethics and legal and regulatory requirements; qualifications and independence of the Company's independent auditors (including both our independent registered public accounting firm and our statutory auditors); and performance of the Company's independent auditors and internal auditors. Our Board has determined that Ms. Ricciardello is an audit committee financial expert as that term is defined under the applicable SEC rules and regulations. The audit committee's report relating to 2011 begins on page 47 of this proxy statement.

Compensation Committee (five meetings). The current members of the compensation committee are Marc E. Leland, Chair, Michael A. Cawley, Jack E. Little and Jon A. Marshall. The primary responsibilities of the compensation committee are to discharge our Board's responsibilities relating to compensation of directors and executive officers, to assist our Board in reviewing and administering compensation, benefits, incentive and equity-based compensation plans, and to prepare an annual disclosure under the caption "Compensation Committee Report" for inclusion in the Company's proxy statement for its annual general meeting of shareholders. The compensation committee's report relating to 2011 appears on page 30 of this proxy statement.

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee (four meetings). The current members of the nominating and corporate governance committee are Michael A. Cawley, Chair, Julie H. Edwards and Marc E. Leland. The primary responsibilities of the nominating and corporate governance committee are to assist our Board in reviewing, evaluating, selecting and recommending director nominees when one or more directors are to be appointed, elected or re-elected to our Board; to monitor, develop and recommend to our Board a set of principles, policies and practices relating to corporate governance; and to oversee the process by which our Board, our Chief Executive Officer and executive management are evaluated.

The nominating and corporate governance committee believes that directors should possess the highest personal and professional ethics, character, integrity and values; an inquisitive and objective perspective; practical wisdom; and mature judgment. Directors must be willing to devote sufficient time to discharging their duties and responsibilities effectively, and they should be committed to serving on our Board for an extended period of time. The nominating and corporate governance committee considers diversity in identifying nominees for director and endeavors to have a Board representing diverse experience in areas that will contribute to our Board's ability to perform its roles relating to oversight of the Company's business, strategy and risk exposure worldwide. Without limiting the generality of the preceding sentence, the nominating and corporate governance committee takes into account, among other things, the diversity of business, leadership and personal experience of Board candidates and determines how that experience will serve the best interests of the Company.

The nominating and corporate governance committee's process for identifying candidates includes seeking recommendations from one or more of the following: current and retired directors and executive officers of the Company; a firm (or firms) that specializes in identifying director candidates (which firm may earn a fee for its services paid by the Company); persons known to directors of the Company in accounting, legal and other professional service organizations or educational institutions; and, subject to compliance with applicable procedures, shareholders of the Company. The nominating and corporate governance committee's process for evaluating candidates includes investigation of the person's specific experiences and skills, time availability in light of commitments, potential conflicts of interest, and independence from management and the Company. Candidates recommended by a shareholder are evaluated in the same manner as are other candidates. We did not receive any recommendations from shareholders of the Company for director nominees for the annual general meeting.

Table of Contents

Under the Company's policy on director attendance at annual general meetings of shareholders, all directors are expected to attend each annual general meeting, and any director who should become unable to attend the annual general meeting is responsible for notifying the Chairman of the Board in advance of the meeting. At the date of this proxy statement, we know of no director who will not attend the annual general meeting. In 2011, all directors attended the annual general meeting of shareholders held on April 29, 2011.

In 2011, our Board held four meetings. In 2011, each director attended at least 75% of the aggregate of (1) the total number of meetings of our Board and (2) the total number of meetings of committees of our Board on which such director served (during the periods that such director served).

Our By-laws provide that our Board will select from among its members one Chairman, and since January 2008, David W. Williams has held both the positions of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Company. For much of our corporate history, our Chief Executive Officer has also served as Chairman. This Board leadership structure has served the Company and our shareholders well and is commonly used by other companies whose securities are publicly traded in the United States.