

■ Market commentary

Following a bruising year for investors in 2022, markets opened 2023 in much better spirits. Growing confidence that inflation in the US and Europe has peaked, with data showing both consumer and producer prices coming in below expectations, boosted markets. Risks remain around inflation, particularly the tightness of the labour market and resulting upward pressure on wages, but the Fed's resolve to bring inflation sustainably down to 2% is undiminished, even at the cost of a significant slowdown in the economy.

Optimism around peak inflation, peak interest rates and a soft-landing for the economy, which has been building since October, has been helped by two other developments in recent weeks. Europe, the epicentre of the energy crisis last year due to its dependency on Russian gas supplies, has seen dramatic falls in natural gas prices. The second key development was China's abrupt move to lift all Covid restrictions late last year. After a very poor period for the Chinese economy and stock market, there are now well-founded expectations of a sizeable recovery in growth this year as pent-up demand and huge savings built up during almost three years of lockdowns are released. The encouraging developments in Europe and China have boosted confidence in these regions, with leading indicators picking up, albeit from low levels, data releases exceeding expectations, and financial markets recovering sharply.

Developed markets, measured by the MSCI World index, returned 7.1% over the month, with the US returning 6.3% while the UK returned 4.5% in local currency terms. Emerging markets rose 7.9% in local terms. Bond markets returned 3.1% in January, as measured by the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Global Broad Market index, with US Treasuries returning 2.3%.

However, there is a risk that markets are getting ahead of themselves in the shorter term with potentially over-optimistic expectations for a soft landing in the economy and an early end to the monetary tightening cycle. We anticipate a much better year for markets this year than last, but believe it is prudent to temper that optimism in the short term given the recovery in markets and the extent of the economic slowdown ahead, the corporate earnings out-turn, and the risk of policy missteps. We are therefore maintaining our current positions in portfolios and seeking to add to risk assets as and when opportunities are presented during the periods of weakness which might well come along in coming months.

Source: Bloomberg Finance LP, Momentum Global Investment Management Limited. All figures are quoted in US dollars, unless otherwise stated. USD/ZAR exchange rate movement over the month of January 2023 is 2.42%.

■ Risk warnings and important notes

Performance figures prior to 08 December 2020, the inception date of the Class C ZAR share, have been simulated to reflect Class B USD share's past performance in South African Rands (ZAR).

Investment in the Fund may not be suitable for all investors and financial advice should be sought before proceeding with an investment. Past performance is not indicative of future returns and there can be no assurance that the performance of the Fund will achieve its stated objective. All performance is calculated on a total returns basis, net of all fees and commissions and in ZAR terms

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The Fund may contain shares or units in underlying funds that do not permit dealing every day. It is not possible to immediately assess the proper market price of these investments, as they will only be realisable on their dealing days.

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