

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2021

The Board of Directors of MCB-Arif Habib Savings and Investments Limited (MCBAH) are pleased to present report on the affairs of the Company for the half year ended December 31, 2021.

PRINCIPAL BUSINESS

The Company is a Non-Banking Finance Company, licensed as Asset Management Company, Investment Advisor and Pension Fund Manager under the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan's regulatory regime.

THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY AND MONEY MARKET REVIEW

The fiscal year started on strong note with government's renewed focus on reviving growth, as new finance minister announced several incentives in fiscal year 2022 (FY22) budget to spur growth. This was in addition to lagged impact of monetary easing (6.25% drop since start of covid lockdowns), low inflation and incentives on capital investment at lower rates (TERF), which further supported to growth premise. However, the sharp recovery in domestic demand, coupled with rising international commodity prices, led to a strong pick-up in imports and a commensurate increase in the current account deficit. Widening deficit also reflected on the exchange rate as the rupee depreciated by 10.4% against USD during first half of fiscal year ending June 2022 (1HFY22).

The country posted a current account deficit of USD 9.1bn in 1HFY22 compared to a surplus of USD 1.3bn in the corresponding period last year. This was the largest CAD since FY18, when country witnessed a deficit of USD 8.7bn in first half of the fiscal year. The deterioration came in primarily on the back of higher imports which grew by 56.9% in 1HFY22 compared to export growth of 29.0%. Trade Deficit increased by 86.0% to USD 21.2bn compared to USD 11.4bn in same period last year. The unprecedented increase in imports mainly came from historic high prices of our commodity basket including crude oil, palm oil, coal coupled with one time vaccines imports. As per our estimates, prices contributed more than two-third of the increase in import bill.

Foreign exchange reserves of central bank saw an increase of USD 0.4bn as Pakistan received USD 2.75 billion from the IMF under its new SDR allocation and USD 3bn from Saudi Arabia for reserve support. The inflows helped in stabilizing forex reserves despite the huge current account deficit and due repayments.

Inflation remained a concern as rising commodities continued to create challenges for policy makers. Headline inflation represented by CPI averaged 9.8% in 1HFY22 compared to 8.6% in 1HFY21. The rise mainly came from higher food prices, elevated energy costs (both electricity and fuel) and second round impact of PKR depreciation, which keeps the prices of imported commodities high. Core inflation as measured by Non Food Non Energy also depicted an upward trend as it increased to 8.5% in December 2021 compared to 6.9% in June 2021. The SBP increased policy rate by a cumulative 275bps to 9.75% in this half to counter inflationary pressures and slow aggregate demand.

On the fiscal side FBR tax collection increased by 32.5% in 1HFY22 to PKR 2,920bn compared to PKR 2,204bn during same period last year. This exceeded the target of 2,633bn by 287bn. The improved tax collection was primarily on the back of higher custom duty and sales tax collected due to higher imports.

Secondary markets yields have increased significantly in the half as SBP started the monetary tightening cycle. The recent depreciation in rupee along with persistently high commodity prices will add pressure to inflation and we expect

average FY22 inflation to clock at 11.7% above the range of 9-11% forecasted by SBP. Bond yields for tenors of 3 years, 5 years and 10 years witnessed a rise of 1.7%, 1.5% and 1.2%, respectively during the period.

EQUITY MARKET REVIEW

The KSE-100 Index posted a negative return of 5.8% (2,760 points drop) in 1HFY22 compared to a positive return of 27.1% in same period last year. Challenging macros (rising in interest rate, depreciating PKR and widening twin deficit), increasing commodity prices, and MSCI's decision to downgrade Pakistan from Emerging Market to Frontier Market all weighted heavily on the index.

Cements, Refinery, Oil & Gas Marketing companies remained the major index dampeners, contributing 1,096 points, 370 points and 339 points to the index fall, respectively. In the cement sector, unprecedented surge in international coal prices (USD 250/ton compared to an average of USD 64.5/ton last year) created a weak near-term earnings outlook for the sector leading to selling pressure. Moreover, decline in refineries and OMCs were largely on the account of delay in approval of refinery policy and continuous accumulation of circular debt, respectively.

Foreign institutional investors continued their selling spree, adding another USD 250 million during the half year, majority of which was countered by Individuals and Insurance companies. During the half year, average trading volumes saw a decline to 340 million shares compared to about 447million shares during the preceding half. Similarly, average trading value during the half saw a drop of 39% over last half to near USD 42 million.

ECONOMY & MARKET – FUTURE OUTLOOK

The policy makers have moved their focus from growth to macroeconomic consolidation in view of elevated current account deficit and higher inflation trajectory. The SBP took a number of measures to curtail aggregate demand and imports including monetary tightening, raising cash reserve requirement and discouraging auto financing by banning financing of imported vehicle while capping financing requirement to PKR 3mn for locally assembled cars. These steps have started yielding results with imports receding from their historic high and currency depicting relative stability.

We expect GDP to grow by 4.6% this year slightly lower than the government target of 4.8%. We expect Agriculture, Industrial and Services Sector to grow by 5.0%, 4.1% and 4.6% respectively. Industrial Sector growth is likely to remain robust but below government target due to some demand compression as a result of monetary tightening. Agriculture sector growth on the other hand is likely to exceed government estimates due to expected bumper wheat and cotton crop. The Covid Vaccination roll out has been quite successful which is anticipated to unleash Services growth as this segment was the most affected by the pandemic.

The persistently elevated international commodities prices especially petroleum, palm oil, coal, fertilizers and steel, has led to a strong pick-up in imports and a rise in the current account deficit, which we expect to close the year around USD 16 billion (4.3% of GDP). This would be the largest current account deficit since fiscal year 2018, when the country posted CAD of USD 19.2 billion (6.1% of GDP). Responding to a high CAD, we expect PKR to depreciate further to end the fiscal year near PKR 183 against a dollar.

Successful continuation of the IMF program will be a key prerequisite to keep the financial account in positive zone. The SBP is expected to continue to discourage unnecessary imports and use flexible market determined exchange rate and appropriate monetary policy setting to ensure sustainable external account position. The remittances along with bilateral and multilateral flows would also be crucial in managing our external position.

The expected rise in energy tariffs, currency depreciation and higher international commodities prices will lead to increase in inflation in this year. We expect inflation to remain in double digits for rest of the fiscal year to average around 11.7% for year. SBP has increased policy rate by a cumulative 275bps to 9.75% to counter inflationary

pressures and ensure that growth remains sustainable. It has indicated that its goal to achieve mildly positive interest rate on a forward-looking basis was now close to being achieved. However, the recent surge in international oil prices poses upside risk to the equation. We expect interest rates to rise around 10%-10.5% by the end of fiscal year.

From capital market perspective, particularly equities, the recent correction in stock prices have opened up valuation. The market has priced in expected interest rate increase and currency depreciation. Market cap to GDP ratio has declined to 14.4%, a discount of 57% from its historical average. Similarly, risk premiums are close to 5.9%, compared to historical average of 1.9% signifying abnormal returns for long term investors. We believe a micro view of sectors and stock will remain important and investment selection should focus on companies which trade at a deep discount to their intrinsic value. The market is currently trading at PER of 5.5x, while offering a dividend yield of 8.2%.

For debt holders, we expect Money Market Funds to continue to seamlessly mirror policy rates throughout the year. On the other hand, government bonds yields may continue to remain at elevated levels given expected increase in interest rates. We remain cautious at the current levels of bond yields and would continue to monitor the data points to capitalize on opportunities.

MUTUAL FUND INDUSTRY REVIEW

The Net Assets of the open end mutual fund industry increased by about 7.0% during the half to PKR 1,090bn at the end of 1HFY22. Total money market funds grew by about 19.9% since June 2021. Within the money market sphere, the conventional funds dominated as they grew by about 33.9% to PKR 382bn while Islamic funds declined by 2.3% to PKR 178bn. In addition, the total fixed Income funds increased by about 0.9% since June 2021, as the conventional income funds declined by 3.7% to PKR 121bn. Equity and related funds declined by 8.1% as market witnessed a decline in the half eroding AUMS as concern over macroeconomic and geopolitical factors kept investors at bay.

In terms of the segment share, Money Market funds were the leader with a share of around 51.4%, followed by Equity and Equity related funds with a share of 25.2% and Income funds having a share of 22.7% as at the end of 1HFY22.

MUTUAL FUND INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

The recent increase in interest rates along with prospect of further monetary tightening would increase flows in the money market funds. The money markets funds by virtue of its short duration would be the ideal for investors with a short term horizon and low risk profile. However recent correction in stock prices have opened up valuations and long term investors would look to add equity exposure at these attractive levels. Our operations remained seamless and given our competitive edge due to aggressive investment in digital access and online customer experience, the environment provides an opportunity with growing number of investors available online.

COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW

During the six months ended December 31, 2021, the net asset under management increased by 10.4% which reached to Rs.170.8 Billion as on December 31, 2021 (June 30, 2021: 154.8 Billion). Consequently, income from Management and Advisory Fees increased by 28% to Rs.445 million compared to Rs. 348 million in corresponding period last year.

However, during the six months period, the performance of Equities remained under pressure and posted negative return of 5.8% as compared to corresponding period when PSX grew by over 27%, which resulted in mark-to-market losses in investment income of the Company. Resultantly, the company earned Rs. 2.6 million from investments compared to Rs. 134.9 million earned during the corresponding period.

Though the Company's earnings from management fees increased by Rs. 97 million but due to negative performance of PSX, the Company earned profit before taxation of Rs. 195.6 million (June 30, 2021: Rs. 264.9 million) and profit after taxation of Rs. 138 million (June 30, 2021: 210 million).

In view of the reported performance of the Company, directors feel great pleasure in declaring interim dividend of 15% (Rs. 1.5 per share).

Better positioning in Corporate and Individual Investors and improving customer reach remained our key focus. We are excited on the opportunities digital platforms provide to expand retail segment. While initial results are continuing to be encouraging, we expect the platforms would require higher investments in the initial years, to improve our reach and customer experience. We remain confident that current investments would bear fruits in future leading to higher returns in coming years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Board of Directors of the Management Company is thankful to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the management of the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited for their continued support and cooperation. The Directors also appreciate the efforts put in by the employees of the Company for their commitment and dedication and shareholders for their confidence in the Company.

For and on Behalf of Board

Muhammad Saqib Saleem
Chief Executive Officer
February 08, 2021

Nasim Beg
Director/Vice Chairman