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Earnings Likely In Focus

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US companies are starting to report their results for the fourth quarter of 2016. While Trump's inauguration and a series of Fed speeches will be closely watched by investors this week, the earnings results and guidance may also drive share prices.

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Market Performance

Global equities finished the first week slightly higher with the MSCI World Index gaining 0.21%. In the US, the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 Index lost 0.39% and 0.1% respectively while the Nasdaq Composite advanced 0.96%.

European equities, as measured by the Stoxx Europe 600 Index, were slightly higher, rising 0.132% on the week. Japanese equities also lost ground with the Nikkei 225 and the Topix declining 0.86% and 0.54% respectively.

EM equities finished the week on a high note with the MSCI EM index rising 1.69% led by MSCI Latin America (1.74%) and MSCI Asia ex Japan (1.88%). Meanwhile the MSCI Emerging Europe lost 0.71%. Within Asia, Singapore (2.11%), Hong Kong (1.93%), offshore Chinese equity (1.83%) are among major gainers.

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US – Earnings likely in focus (Continued)

- US equities finished the week mixed with some paring of the post-election gains as the first news conference by President-elect Donald Trump lacked details of proposed economic policies.
- US companies are starting to report their results for the fourth quarter of 2016. While Trump's inauguration and a series of Fed speeches will be closely watched by investors, 4Q earnings results and guidance may be a crucial driver for share prices.
- Notably, the Financials and Energy sectors are expected to help pave the way for earnings. Citi analysts have a 2017-year end target of 2,425 for the S&P 500. They expect earnings to grow 9%, driven by a rebound in Energy sector profits and lower corporate taxes in 4Q17.

“Cite analysts expect earnings to grow 9%, driven by a rebound in Energy sector profits and lower corporate taxes in 4Q17.”



Source: Citi Research as of 4 January 2017.

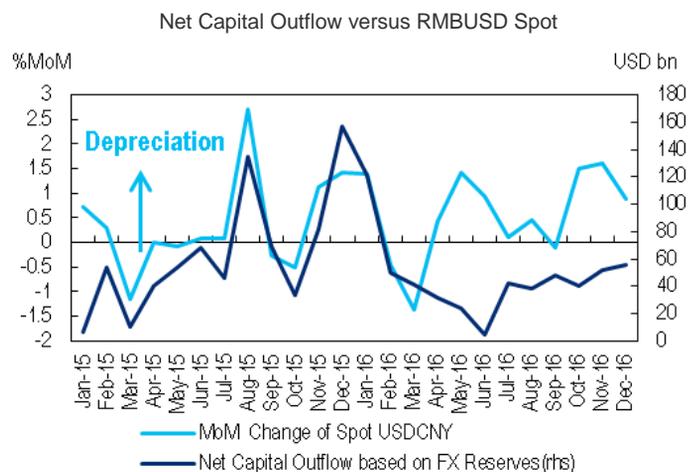
- In the US, Citi analysts have downgraded the Information Technology sector to an underweight after its outperformance in the past six months.
- The opposite can be seen in the Health Care sector's outlook. Since the news conference last week, where Trump indicated that the US government may re-negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, bio tech stocks are down close to 4%. While Citi analysts remain underweight the Health Care sector, they are monitoring the Health Care Equipment & Services and Materials and may upgrade these sectors if fundamentals improve.
- In the US, Citi analysts are currently overweight the Consumer Discretionary, Industrials, Energy and Financials sectors.

China – More RMB weakness expected in the medium term

Despite various government measures to stem China's capital outflow, Citi analysts expect outflows to remain large in 1Q17.

- China's Foreign Exchange reserves declined to US\$3,010.5bn in Dec (Consensus: US\$3,010bn, Citi: US\$3,006.4bn), the sixth consecutive monthly decline. Expectations of a faster pace of rate hikes by the Fed and concerns over potential trade restrictions by the US may have intensified the downward pressure on the RMB.
- At the start of 2017, the government took various measures to stabilize the RMB and capital outflow, including tightening regulations on residents' foreign currency purchases.
- Despite these new measures, Citi analysts believe that China's net capital outflow could remain large at around US\$160bn in 1Q17.
- As capital outflow may intensify in the near term and therefore tighten monetary conditions, Citi analysts maintain our call that the Chinese central bank could cut the Reserve Requirement Ratio by 50 basis points in Q1.

“RMB strength likely to persist in coming weeks but may weaken over the medium term.”



- Citi believes that the RMB strength is likely to persist in the coming weeks, as the Chinese authorities have shown a readiness to protect the currency. But expect further RMB depreciation over the medium term as a consequence of steady capital outflows given a stronger USD.

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