

COUNTRY RISK WEEKLY BULLETIN

NEWS HEADLINES

WORLD

Global debt equivalent to 308% of GDP at end-2025

The Institute of International Finance indicated that global debt, which includes the debt of governments, corporates and households, reached \$348.3 trillion (tn) at the end of 2025, constituting an increase of \$28.9tn, or of 9%, from \$319.5tn at end-2024. The debt of advanced economies accounted for 66.5% of the total, while the debt of emerging markets (EM) represented the balance of 33.5%. It noted that the total debt was equivalent to 308.3% of the weighted average global GDP at end-2025 compared to 308.6% of global GDP at end-2024. It added that the debt of advanced economies amounted to \$231.7tn or 361% of GDP, while the debt of EMs totaled \$116.6tn or 235.2% of GDP at end-2025. It pointed out that the aggregate government debt totaled \$106.7tn, or 94.8% of global GDP, at end-2025, followed by the debt of corporates excluding financial institutions debt with \$100.6tn (88.2% of GDP), financial sector indebtedness with \$76.4tn (68.2% of GDP), and household debt with \$64.6tn (57% of GDP). In parallel, it said that EM corporate debt financial institutions totaled \$44.4tn or 89.3% of GDP at end-2025, followed by EM government borrowing at \$36.4tn (73.3% of GDP), EM household debt at \$21.2tn (42.9% of GDP), and the financial sector's indebtedness at \$14.7tn (29.7% of GDP). Also, it noted that the borrowing of governments in advanced economies stood at \$70.3tn or 110.4% of GDP, followed by the financial sector's debt at \$61.7tn (96% of GDP), corporate debt ex-financial institutions at \$56.2tn (87.4% of GDP), and household debt at \$43.4tn (67.2% of GDP).

Source: *Institute of International Finance*

Tourist arrivals up 4% to 1.52 billion in 2025

Figures released by the United Nations World Tourism Organization show that international tourist arrivals reached 1.52 billion in 2025, constituting a rise of 58 million visitors, or of 4%, from 1.47 billion global tourist arrivals in 2024. Also, the number of tourist arrivals to advanced economies stood at 812 million in 2025 and represented 53.3% of aggregate arrivals, while the number of tourist arrivals to emerging economies totaled 711 million and represented 46.7% of the total. In comparison, the number of tourist arrivals to advanced economies reached 784 million in 2024 and accounted for 53.5% of total arrivals, while the number of arrivals to emerging economies reached 681 million, or 46.5% of the total. Also, the number of tourist arrivals to Europe stood at 793.5 million in 2025 and accounted for 52% of total arrivals, followed by the Asia & the Pacific region with 330.7 million (21.7% of the total), the Americas with 218.1 million arrivals (14.3%), the Middle East with 99.8 million arrivals (6.6%), and Africa with 81.3 million arrivals (5.3%). In addition, the number of tourist arrivals to Africa surged by 7.8% in 2025, followed by a rise of 6.3% in arrivals to the Asia & Pacific region, to Europe (+3.8%), to the Middle East (+3.3), and to the Americas (+0.6%). In parallel, tourist arrivals to the Middle East surged by 39.4% in 2025 from 2019, arrivals to Africa rose by 16.8%, and those to Europe grew by 6.4%; while tourist arrivals to the Asia & Pacific region decreased by 8.7%, followed by a decline of 0.5% in arrivals to the Americas during the covered period.

Source: *World Tourism Organization, Byblos Research*

MENA

Government readiness for Artificial Intelligence varies across countries

Oxford Insights' Government AI Readiness Index for 2025 ranked Saudi Arabia in 15th place among 195 countries globally and in first place among 20 Arab countries. The UAE followed in 19th place, then Bahrain (48th), Egypt (52nd) and Qatar (54th) as the five Arab countries with the highest readiness to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the delivery of public services; while Mauritania (138th), Djibouti (148th), Syria (165th), Sudan (186th), and Yemen (191st) had the lowest AI readiness among Arab economies. The index measures the readiness and the potential of governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services to their citizens. The Arab countries' average score stood at 41.7 points in 2025, and came lower than the global average score of 42.5 points. The average score of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries was 59.9 points, while the average of non-GCC Arab countries stood at 33.9 points. Also, the Arab countries average score was higher than the average scores of South & Central Asia (41.4 points), Latin America & the Caribbean (34 points), the Pacific region (30.4 points), and Sub-Saharan Africa (28 points); while it came lower than the average scores of North America (79.8 points), Western Europe (62.8 points), Eastern Europe (53.8 points), and East Asia (49.1 points). In parallel, the UAE was the top ranked Arab country on the AI infrastructure, Public Sector Adoption, and Development & Diffusion pillars, while Egypt came in first place in the Arab world on the Policy Capacity and Resilience pillars, and Saudi Arabia ranked first on the Governance pillar.

Source: *Oxford Insights, Byblos Research*

SAUDI ARABIA

Private equity investments down 21% to \$2.2bn in 2025

Figures released by online platform Magnitt show that private equity (PE) investments in Saudi Arabia stood at \$2.2bn in 2025, constituting a decline of 21.2% from \$2.8bn in 2024, and compared to \$4bn in 2023, \$3.5bn in 2022, and \$648m in 2021. Further, there were 25 PE deals in 2025, representing an increase of 31.6% from 19 PE transactions in 2024, and relative to 43 PE deals in 2023, 33 PE transactions in 2022, and 17 PE deals in 2021. As such, PE investments in the Kingdom decreased by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.8% in the 2021-25 period, while the number of transactions increased by a CAGR of 7.1% in the covered period. Also, buyout transactions accounted for 89% of total disclosed PE investments in Saudi Arabia in 2025, up from 82% in 2024. In parallel, PE investments in the media & entertainment industry amounted to \$2bn and accounted for 88.8% of aggregate PE investments in the kingdom last year, followed by investments in financial services with \$135m (6.1%), and the healthcare sector with \$114m (5.1%). Also, there were five investments in enterprise software firms, or 20% of the aggregate number of deals in 2025, followed by four transactions in the food and beverage industry (16%), three deals each in the financial services and media & entertainment sectors (12% each), and two transactions in the e-commerce & retail industry (8%).

Source: *Magnitt, Byblos Research*

OUTLOOK

WORLD

Gold prices contingent on macroeconomic drivers

The Institute of International Finance expected the future trajectory of gold prices to remain closely tied to broader macroeconomic and financial conditions. Under its soft-landing scenario characterized by a gradual monetary easing, a slightly weaker exchange rate of the US dollar, improving global liquidity and sustained demand from central banks, it anticipated gold prices to remain elevated in the 2026-27 period. But it said that the pace of the metal's price increase is likely to moderate as supportive macroeconomic tailwinds gradually diminish. As such, it projected gold prices to average about \$5,300 per ounce in 2026 and \$5,500 an ounce in 2027, and for prices to end the year higher than the annual average under this scenario.

However, it estimated that gold prices could decline or remain flat in the 2026-27 period, as investors take profits or sentiment for equities and risk assets temporarily improves. But it considered that a sharp and prolonged downturn in gold prices seems unlikely, unless global monetary policy tightens significantly and geopolitical tensions ease substantially.

Further, it considered that gold prices will continue to respond to developments in real yields on U.S. Treasuries, the exchange rate of the US dollar, global liquidity conditions, buying by central banks, and geopolitical risks. It pointed out that upside risks to gold prices include a faster-than-expected decline in real yields, renewed financial stress globally, stronger-than-anticipated inflows in gold-backed exchange-traded funds, or an escalation in geopolitical tensions that would support safe-haven demand. In contrast, it noted that downside risks to gold prices could originate from a higher-for-longer interest rate environment, the appreciation of the US dollar exchange rate against other currencies, or a slowdown in purchases from central banks. It said that the evolution of these key macroeconomic drivers, rather than a mechanical continuation of recent gains, will ultimately determine the direction of gold prices.

Source: Institute of International Finance

EMERGING MARKETS

Emerging countries to benefit from demand for AI

BNP Paribas considered that the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has positioned resource rich emerging markets (EMs), mainly those with critical metals and semiconductor production capacities, as key players with a strategic advantage that could help them form partnerships, attract foreign investments, and develop new projects in the mining sector, while capitalizing on the increased use of AI. It noted that EMs have a wide range of exposures in the AI ecosystem in terms of their ability to innovate, finance and adopt technologies, their sensitivity to the impact of AI on productivity and employment, or their positioning within supply chains. As such, it projected the real GDP growth rate of EMs at 4.1% in 2026, driven by the sustained increase in the use of AI and the rapid rise of investments in AI infrastructure.

Further, it noted that EMs are not as well positioned as advanced economies (AEs) to benefit from the adoption and diffusion of AI, but added that they are generally better placed than AEs within AI supply chains. It indicated that these chains cover ac-

tivities related to the chip industry, equipment and other electronic materials, and AI infrastructure, which are strategically important and very capital and energy intensive. As a result, it considered that EM countries that are well positioned within AI supply chains benefit from an economic growth engine and from a strategic asset.

Also, it stated that industrialized countries in Asia, which account for about 85% of the global export of electronic chips, are the best placed economies to capitalize on the increasing demand for AI. But it noted that this advantage comes with greater exposure to the risk of a technology market correction, such as a downturn in demand or investment that could sharply affect chip exports and related industries. In addition, it considered that producers of minerals or of chips in EMs remain exposed to the risks arising from the heavy concentration of major AI players in an environment of heightened geopolitical tensions.

Source: BNP Paribas

SYRIA

Growth prospects positive despite institutional challenges

The International Monetary Fund indicated that economic activity in Syria is recovering at an accelerating pace, supported by improving consumer confidence and investor sentiment, the lifting of international sanctions, the continuing return of refugees, increased electricity provision and rainfall, the announcement of several large new investment projects, and the country's steady re-integration in the regional and global economies. Further, it said that the central government budget posted a small surplus in 2025 by prudently containing spending to available resources, and with the Ministry of Finance refraining from monetary financing. It added that the authorities have drafted a budget for 2026 that aims to substantially boost spending on healthcare, education, the rehabilitation of essential infrastructure, and public sector wages. Also, it pointed out that the budget includes important safeguards to address potential shortfalls in revenues or financing, and stressed the need to continue to improve the efficiency and transparency of public spending, supported by the planned digitalization of government services.

Also, it called on the Ministry of Finance to play a key role in assessing the multiple large investment projects that the authorities are pursuing with the private sector and to limit contingent liabilities. Also, it stressed the need to improve the governance and operations of state-owned enterprises, in order to improve their efficiency and financial viability. It said that the authorities' ability to mobilize external financing will depend on progress towards addressing Syria's legacy debts, and added that strong international support will be essential to help alleviate poverty, among returning refugees and internally displaced people.

In parallel, it stated that the Central Bank of Syria (CBS) managed to maintain a tight monetary stance despite the many constraints it faces. It considered that the authorities' priority should be to empower the CBS to maintain price and financial stability, to ensure its independence, to develop an appropriate monetary policy framework, as well as to assess the banks' financial health and to restructure the banking system, in order to allow for the effective implementation and transmission of monetary policy.

Source: International Monetary Fund



ECONOMY & TRADE

BAHRAIN

Sovereign ratings downgraded on rising debt level and fiscal pressures

Fitch Ratings downgraded Bahrain's long-term foreign currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) from 'B+' to 'B', which is five notches below investment grade, and affirmed the long-term local currency IDR at 'B'. Further, it revised the outlook on the long-term foreign currency ratings from 'negative' to 'stable'. It attributed the downgrade to the risks stemming from the increase of the already elevated public debt level despite the implementation of a fiscal consolidation package. It added that the ratings are constrained by wide fiscal deficits and low levels of foreign currency reserves, and projected the gross public debt level to rise from 146.8% of GDP in 2025 to 153.3% of GDP in 2027, well above the median of 'B'-rated sovereign of 53.4% of GDP. It said that the 'stable' outlook reflects the support from other Gulf Cooperation Council sovereigns and high GDP per capita. It considered that Bahrain will remain dependent on GCC funding and market access to maintain the currency peg of the Bahraini dinar to the US dollar, despite current account surpluses that it projected to average 4.9% of GDP in the 2026-27 period. It noted that the Central Bank of Bahrain's foreign currency reserves were equivalent to 1.3 months of current external payments at end-2025, below the 'B' category median of 4.5 months. Also, it stated that it could upgrade the ratings if the government debt level decreases, and/or if support from GCC governments remains strong. But it said that it may downgrade the ratings if the public debt level increases as a result of insufficient fiscal consolidation, and/or in case of signs of weakening GCC support, which would increase pressure on the balance of payments.

Source: Fitch Ratings

BANGLADESH

Macroeconomic stability contingent on reforms

Fitch Ratings considered that the results of the parliamentary elections in Bangladesh have reduced the country's near-term political and policy uncertainties, which could support improvements in macroeconomic stability. It said that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party has secured 70% of the seats in parliament, which supports its ability to implement its policy agenda. But it noted that weak governance, banking-sector vulnerabilities, and a fragile external liquidity position indicate that Bangladesh's credit rating will depend on the new government's ability to implement its macroeconomic and fiscal reforms agenda. Also, it stated that the reform agenda of the new government appears consistent with the macro-stabilization agenda under the \$5.5bn International Monetary Fund program that began in January 2023 and covers the 2026-27 period. It added that the new government's fiscal objective is to raise tax revenues to 10% of GDP in the medium term by reforming the tax administration, reducing exemptions and broadening the tax base, along with a near-term increase in revenues equivalent to 2% of GDP. Also, it noted that foreign currency reserves reached \$29.7bn on February 10, 2026, up from \$26.9bn at end-June 2025, but it cautioned that external liquidity remains a key near-term concern despite the increase in reserves. It said that a manageable external debt repayment profile and the prevalence of government-backed debt help contain the debt's refinancing risks.

Source: Fitch Ratings

ARMENIA

Outlook revised to 'positive' on improved geopolitical dynamics and favorable growth prospects

S&P Global Ratings affirmed Armenia's long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings at 'BB-', which are three notches below investment grade, as well as the short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings at 'B'. It affirmed the transfer and convertibility assessment at 'BB' and revised the outlook on the long-term ratings from 'stable' to 'positive'. It attributed the outlook revision to the potential improvement in regional geopolitical and security dynamics, especially the progress towards normalizing diplomatic and trade relations with Azerbaijan. It said that the 'positive' outlook reflects Armenia's favorable growth prospects, the increase of the Central Bank of Armenia's (CBA) foreign currency reserves, and a flexible exchange rate that should help mitigate unexpected external shocks. Also, it noted that the ratings are supported by the country's strong economic growth prospects, a prudent policy framework, and the CBA's improved foreign currency reserves position. But it said that the ratings are constrained by the country's weak but gradually improving institutional framework, moderate per capita income levels, balance-of-payments and fiscal vulnerabilities, and its exposure to geopolitical and external security risks. Further, it forecast the country's gross external financing needs at 115.7% of current account receipts and usable reserves in 2026 period and at 114.5% and 114% of such receipts and reserves in 2027 and 2028. In parallel, it indicated that it could upgrade the ratings if security and geopolitical risks continue to recede, and/or if the country's fiscal and external positions improve. But it noted that it could downgrade the ratings if the country's fiscal and external positions deteriorate, and/or if geopolitical tensions.

Source: S&P Global Ratings

PAKISTAN

Credit profile limited by weak governance and fiscal metrics

In its periodic review of Pakistan's credit profile, Moody's Ratings indicated that the sovereign's long-term foreign- and local-currency issuer ratings of 'Caa1', which is seven notches below investment grade, reflects the government's high liquidity and external vulnerability risks. In addition, it noted that Pakistan's very weak fiscal strength, weak governance, and high political uncertainties constitute constraints to the sovereign's credit profile. Further, it noted that the economic strength assessment of 'baa3' balances the country's large economy and moderate GDP growth potential with its low per capita income. Further, it said that the institutions and governance strength assessment of 'b3' reflects the country's weak governance and low monetary and fiscal policy effectiveness. It added that the 'caa3' fiscal strength assessment captures the government's very weak debt affordability and high but declining debt burden. Also, it stated that the 'b' susceptibility to event risk score is primarily driven by political, external vulnerability and government liquidity risks. In addition, it pointed out that the 'stable' outlook on the ratings balances the decline in the debt servicing burden and the improvement of the country's external buffers, with delays in reforms that could put obstacles to the flow of official foreign financing and weaken Pakistan's external position again.

Source: Moody's Ratings



BANKING

SAUDI ARABIA

Corporate borrowing to drive medium-term lending growth

Fitch Ratings estimated that the Saudi banks' financing of giga projects under Vision 2030 accounted for 6% of the banking sector's aggregate outstanding loans at the end of 2025. But it expected the banks' financing of these projects to increase in the near term, as the latter make progress towards becoming fully operational. It said that the financing of giga projects carries a regulatory risk-weight of about 80% to 130%, as high lending to these initiatives could weigh on the banks' capital metrics. It added that, along with more stringent capital regulations, banks could make greater use of tools, such as residential mortgage-backed securities and significant risk transfers, to relieve pressure on their capital ratios or to adjust their dividend payouts. It said that corporate borrowing is likely to remain a key driver of the banks' medium-term lending growth, as corporate loans increased at an annual average rate of about 16% since 2022 and accounted for about 80% of new loans in 2025, and anticipated that large, non-giga projects infrastructure initiatives would support corporate credit demand in the long term. Also, it pointed out that lending to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) rose from 6% of total loans at end-2019 to 11% of the sector's lending at end-September 2025, which is still below the 20% target for 2030 under Vision 2030. As such, it expected a moderate acceleration in lending to SMEs, supported by the lower risk-weighted asset density of SME financing, which is 75% under final Basel III rules. Further, it said that domestic liquidity conditions have tightened in recent years, with the sector's loans-to-deposits ratio increasing from 110% at end-2024 to 113% at end-2025, which will drive the diversification of the banks' funding sources.

Source: Fitch Ratings

ALGERIA

Algiers completes most of its AML/CFT action plan

In its February 2026 update, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global standard-setting body for anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT), maintained Algeria on its list of "jurisdictions under increased monitoring", and indicated that Algiers made a high-level political commitment in October 2024 to work with the FATF and its regional body MENAFATF to strengthen the effectiveness of its AML/CFT regime. But the FATF noted that it made the initial determination that Algeria has completed its action plan and warrants an on-site assessment to verify that the implementation of AML/CFT reforms has begun and is being sustained, and that the necessary political commitment remains in place to maintain the plan's implementation in the future. Further, it said that Algeria has made progress on several recommended actions, including improving risk-based supervision through the adoption of new procedures, risk assessments, supervision manuals and guidelines; developing an effective framework for basic and beneficial ownership information; implementing an effective legal and institutional framework for targeted financial sanctions for terrorism financing; enhancing the country's regime for suspicious transaction reports; and implementing a risk-based approach for the oversight of non-profit organizations (NPOs) without disrupting or discouraging the activity of legitimate NPOs.

Source: Financial Action Task Force

EGYPT

Banks to benefit from positive economic trend

S&P Global Ratings anticipated that a supportive macroeconomic environment, favorable financing conditions, increased private sector investments, sustained tourism activity, as well as a loosening of monetary policy and a deceleration in inflation, will support the banking sector's growth and lead to a 25% increase in lending in the 2026-27 period. It anticipated demand for loans from the private sector to pick up in 2026, as the funding of new investments and a more stable exchange rate will drive corporate credit demand. Also, it expected small and medium-size enterprises to contribute to strong demand for working capital, and that demand for capital expenditures, especially in the information technology, building materials, oil and gas, shipping, and infrastructure sectors, will drive lending growth. Further, it noted that the government and public sector entities will remain a significant contributor to credit growth due to their substantial financing needs. In addition, it pointed out that the non-performing loans ratio (NPLs) stood at 2% in September 2025, and anticipated that higher lending volumes and an improving economic environment will support the stabilization of the NPLs ratio in the next two years and will increase the ability of borrowers to meet their obligations. In parallel, it pointed out that a large and growing deposits base will continue to support the funding profile of banks and to facilitate their lending expansion. In addition, it noted that the sector's capital ratio stood at 18.6% as of June 2025, comfortably exceeding the Central Bank of Egypt's minimum requirement of 12.5%. Further, it forecast the banks' cost of risk to gradually decrease from 2.5% in 2024 to 1.3% in 2026 amid a normalization of credit losses across the sector, driven by lower default rates and improved provisioning coverage.

Source: S&P Global Ratings

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Capital adequacy ratio at 16.3%, NPLs ratio at 6.4% at end-June 2025

The International Monetary Fund indicated that the soundness of Côte d'Ivoire's banking sector has improved, due to tighter risk control and stronger capital buffers, and considered that Ivorian banks are performing better than other banking sectors in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. It said that the sector's risk-weighted capital adequacy ratio increased from 13.3% at end-2023 to 13.6% at end-2024 and 16.3% at end-June 2025, well above the prudential minimum of 11.5%, supported by the banks' recapitalization. It added that the banks' Tier One capital ratio slightly improved from 12.4% at end-2023 to 12.6% at end-2024, the latest available figures, and that their capital-to-assets ratio was 8.1% at end-2024 relative to 7.7% a year earlier. Also, it noted that the non-performing loans (NPLs) ratio regressed from 7.3% at end-2023 to 6.3% at end-2024 and to 6.4% at end-June 2025 due to a steep decline in gross NPLs and to the expansion of the loans portfolio. Also, it said that general provisions covered 78% of NPLs at end-2024 relative to 63.3% at end-2023, and that the banks' NPLs net of provisions were equivalent to 1.5% of total loans and to 10.5% of capital at end-2024, down from 2.8% of total loans and 19.8% of capital a year earlier. Further, it noted that their liquid assets were equivalent to 36.3% of total deposits at end-2024, unchanged from a year earlier.

Source: International Monetary Fund



ENERGY / COMMODITIES

Oil prices to average \$67 p/b in first quarter of 2026

The price of ICE Brent Crude oil front-month futures contracts have been volatile so far this month, trading at between \$66.3 per barrel (p/b) and \$71.8 p/b due to a combination of global supply and demand dynamics as well as geopolitical risks. Also, oil prices have been trading at between \$70.9 p/b and \$71.5 p/b this week, as elevated U.S. crude oil is outweighing the threat to oil supply from a potential military conflict between the U.S. and Iran. In parallel, Goldman Sachs projected global oil demand at 105.5 million barrels per day (b/d) in 2026, up by 1.2% from 104.3 million b/d in 2025, and for global oil supply to reach 107.8 million b/d this year compared to 106 million b/d in 2025. It forecast non-OPEC+ producers to supply 62.4 million b/d, followed by OPEC members with 35.3 million b/d and Russia with 10.1 million b/d. As such, it expected a surplus of 2.3 million b/d in 2026 in the absence of significant supply shocks and without a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine. It also anticipated the OPEC+ coalition to gradually increase oil production in the second quarter of 2026. Further, it said that risks to the global oil outlook are tilted to the upside and include a decline of one million b/d in Iranian oil output, which corresponds to 50% of its crude exports, in case of damage to its export and production infrastructure, or in case of blockades and the intensification of sanctions against Russia. However, it expected a gradual rise of 0.5 million b/d in Iran crude oil output and a gradual recovery of 11 million b/d of Russian liquids production, in case of sanctions relief on both countries. In parallel, it projected Brent oil prices to average \$67 p/b in the first quarter of 2026.

Source: Goldman Sachs, LSEG Workspace, Byblos Research

Middle East demand for gold down 3.5% in 2025

Consumer demand for gold in the Middle East, which includes demand for jewelry and for bars and coins, totaled 271.3 tons in 2025, constituting a decrease of 3.5% from 281.2 tons in 2024. Gold demand in the region accounted for 10% of the global consumption of the precious metal in 2025. Also, consumer demand for gold in Iran reached 72.7 tons and represented 26.8% of the region's aggregate demand in the covered period, followed by Saudi Arabia with 61.6 tons (22.7%), Egypt with 45.1 tons (16.6%), the UAE with 44.2 tons (16.3%), and Kuwait with 17.1 tons (6.3%).

Source: World Gold Council, Byblos Research

ME&A's oil demand to increase by 2.3% in 2026

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries projected the consumption of crude oil in the Middle East & Africa to average 14.13 million barrels per day (b/d) in 2026, which would constitute an increase of 2.3% from 13.81 million b/d in 2025. The region's demand for oil would represent 23.4% of consumption in non-OECD countries and 13.3% of global consumption in 2026.

Source: OPEC

Algeria's oil exports up 1% in December 2025

Crude oil production in Algeria reached 972,000 barrels per day (b/d) in December 2025, constituting an uptick of 0.4% from 968,000 b/d in November 2025. Further, aggregate crude oil exports stood at 432,000 b/d in December 2025 and increased by 1% from 428,000 b/d in November 2025.

Source: JODI, Byblos Research

Base Metals: Iron ore prices to average \$100 per dry metric ton in first quarter of 2026

LME iron ore cash prices averaged \$105.7 per dry metric ton (dmt) in the year-to-February 25, 2026 period, constituting an increase of 2.1% from an average of \$103.6 per dmt in the same period of 2025, due to a combination of slower demand from China's steel sector, supply disruptions in key producing regions, and investor uncertainties tied to global trade tensions. In parallel, in its base-case scenario, Citi Research forecast iron ore prices to average between \$100 per dmt and \$105 a dmt in the near term. It said that restocking by Chinese mills ahead of the Lunar New Year in the first quarter of 2026, along with seasonal supply disruptions in Australia and Brazil, are likely to keep prices resilient and limit downside risks in the coming months. Under its bear case scenario, it expected iron ore prices to fall to \$80 per dmt in the first half of 2026, driven by increased use of scrap steel in electric arc furnaces, and improved supply, including a faster than expected ramp up of the Simandou mine which is located in Guinea and is one of the world's largest untapped high grade iron ore deposits. Further, in its bull case scenario, it forecast iron ore prices to rise to \$120 per dmt in the first half of 2026, underpinned by steel intensive property and policy measures that would support domestic consumption in China, elevated hot metal output, and tightening supply. In addition, it stated that political risks in Guinea, remains a major uncertainty for iron ore prices. Further, Citi Research projected LME iron ore cash prices to average \$100 per dmt in the first quarter of 2026.

Source: Citi Research, LSEG Workspace, Byblos Research

Precious Metals: Gold prices to average \$5,000 per ounce in first quarter of 2026

Gold prices averaged \$4,842.4 per ounce in the year-to-February 25, 2026 period, constituting a surge of 73.7% from an average of \$2,788 an ounce in the same period of 2025, largely driven by strong demand from central banks worldwide, as well as to concerns about global economic uncertainties. Also, gold prices reached an all-time high of \$5,284.6 per ounce on January 28, 2026 due to the metal's strong appeal as a safe haven for investors, amid geopolitical uncertainties regarding the U.S.-Iran confrontation and growing concerns about global economic stability. Further, figures released by the World Gold Council show that global inflows into gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs) reached 801.2 tons in 2025, with inflows of 445.6 tons in North America, 215.4 tons in Asia, 131.4 tons in Europe and 8.9 tons in other regions. In addition, it pointed out that gold-backed ETFs totaled 230 tons in the first quarter, 171.1 tons in the second quarter, 225.6 tons in the third quarter and 174.6 tons in the fourth quarter of 2025. In comparison, global outflows from gold-backed ETFs stood at 2.9 tons in 2024, with inflows of 82.2 tons in Asia, 8 tons in North America, 4.7 tons in other regions, and outflows of 97.8 tons in Europe. In parallel, Citi Research forecast gold prices to average \$5,000 per ounce in the first quarter of 2026.

Source: World Gold Council, Citi Research, LSEG workspace, Byblos Research



COUNTRY RISK METRICS

Countries	LT Foreign currency rating				General gvt. balance/ GDP (%)	Gross Public debt (% of GDP)	Usable Reserves / CAPs* (months)	Short-Term External Debt by Rem. Mat./ CARs	Gvt. Interest Exp./ Rev. (%)	Gross Ext. Fin. needs / (CAR + Use. Res.) (%)	Current Account Balance / GDP (%)	Net FDI / GDP (%)
	S&P	Moody's	Fitch	CI								
Africa												
Algeria	-	-	-	-	-11.3	58.2	-	-	-	-	-8.9	-
Angola	B- Stable	B3 Stable	B- Stable	-	-4.2	48.1	4.8	52.0	31.7	104.8	2.5	-1.3
Egypt	B Stable	Caa1 Positive	B Stable	B Stable	-7.1	81.0	3.3	63.5	71.9	135.4	-4.0	2.0
Ethiopia	SD	Caa3 Stable	CCC-	-	-1.7	30.9	2.5	31.4	10.4	116.0	-2.3	2.0
Ghana	B Stable	Ca Positive	B- Stable	-	-3.9	50.7	2.0	17.4	19.6	95.5	2.9	1.7
Côte d'Ivoire	BB Stable	Ba2 Stable	BB Stable	-	-3.1	56.0	3.9	36.4	16.3	107.4	-2.5	2.5
Libya	-	-	-	-	-3.9	75.7	-	-	-	-	-13.1	-
Dem Rep Congo	B- Stable	B3 Stable	-	-	-1.8	17.9	1.8	8.0	2.8	97.2	-2.7	2.2
Morocco	BBB- Stable	Ba1 Stable	BB+ Stable	-	-3.0	62.0	4.6	26.8	7.1	93.7	-2.2	1.7
Nigeria	B- Positive	B3 Positive	B Stable	-	-3.8	46.0	5.7	57.2	28.9	101.5	4.4	0.3
Sudan	-	-	-	-	-1.1	81.6	-	-	-	-	-12.7	-
Tunisia	-	Caa1 Stable	B- Stable	-	-4.3	80.2	-	-	-	-	-2.2	-
Burkina Faso	CCC+ Stable	-	-	-	-3.8	59.1	1.8	59.9	11.2	143.1	-1.9	0.7
Rwanda	B+ Stable	B2 Stable	B+ Stable	-	-4.2	74.1	3.9	20.6	10.4	112.0	-14.7	7.4
Middle East												
Bahrain	B Stable	B2 Stable	B Stable	B+ Negative	-5.9	142.7	-4.2	152.5	33.8	380.8	1.3	3.0
Iran	-	-	-	-	-4.0	40.9	-	-	-	-	1.1	-
Iraq	B- Stable	Caa1 Stable	B- Stable	-	-4.2	47.7	12.8	3.5	2.4	48.5	2.3	-3.0
Jordan	BB- Stable	Ba3 Stable	BB- Stable	BB- Stable	-1.6	94.3	2.3	68.2	13.3	147.6	-6.1	3.1
Kuwait	AA- Stable	A1 Stable	AA- Stable	A+ Stable	-9.1	17.5	2.3	56.1	1.3	114.6	19.8	-6.0
Lebanon	SD	C	RD**	-	0.0	88.6	2.1	192.2	3.8	264.1	-13.3	3.5
Oman	BBB- Stable	Baa3 Stable	BBB- Stable	BBB- Positive	0.0	36.5	1.9	27.6	6.7	113.4	-3.0	7.0
Qatar	AA Stable	Aa2 Stable	AA Stable	AA Stable	-0.8	42.5	2.9	136.1	5.0	181.3	13.6	-0.7
Saudi Arabia	A+ Stable	A1 Positive	A+ Stable	AA- Stable	-4.0	30.3	8.3	36.9	3.1	83.0	-2.9	0.8
Syria	-	-	-	-	-4.0	38.4	-	-	-	-	-9.6	-
UAE	AA Stable	Aa2 Stable	AA- Stable	AA- Stable	2.9	30.8	-	-	-	-	5.6	-
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-5.1	69.3	-	-	-	-	-6.6	-



COUNTRY RISK METRICS

Countries	LT Foreign currency rating				General gvt. balance/ GDP (%)	Gross Public debt (% of GDP)	Usable Reserves / CAPs* (months)	Short-Term External Debt by Rem. Mat./ CARs	Gvt. Interest Exp./ Rev. (%)	Gross Ext. Fin. needs / (CAR + Use. Res.) (%)	Current Account Balance / GDP (%)	Net FDI / GDP (%)
	S&P	Moody's	Fitch	CI								
Asia												
Armenia	BB- Positive	Ba3 Stable	BB- Positive	B+ Positive	-4.1	50.3	2.2	31.4	12.9	117.5	-5.0	1.8
China	A+ Stable	A1 Negative	A+ Stable	- -	-3.0	78.4	11.0	23.6	7.0	60.8	3.6	0.7
India	BBB- Stable	Baa3 Stable	BBB- Stable	- -	-6.9	81.4	7.1	29.9	24.2	83.4	-5.6	0.7
Kazakhstan	BBB- Stable	Baa2 Positive	BBB Stable	- -	-3.8	28.7	6.5	33.7	13.7	91.5	-4.2	1.5
Pakistan	B- Stable	Caa1 Stable	B- Stable	- -	-5.1	70.8	2.7	28.7	47.8	107.4	-0.7	0.3
Bangladesh	B+ Stable	B2 Negative	B+ Stable	- -	-4.5	36.4	3.5	24.3	26.2	99.5	-0.9	0.3
Central & Eastern Europe												
Bulgaria	BBB Positive	Baa1 Stable	BBB Positive	- -	-3.4	30.9	1.0	20.7	1.9	115.0	-2.7	2.1
Romania	BBB- Stable	Baa3 Stable	BBB- Stable	- -	-6.4	60.7	4.8	27.2	9.1	98.8	-6.6	2.0
Russia	- -	- -	- -	- -	-1.7	20.7	-	-	-	-	0.5	-
Türkiye	BB- Stable	B03 Stable	BB- Stable	BB- Positive	-3.6	25.8	3.2	62.9	15.3	132.3	-1.6	0.4
Ukraine	CC Negative	Ca Stable	CC -	- -	-1.3	101.7	5.1	42.1	8.1	108.1	-9.4	2.0

*Current account payments

**Fitch withdrew the ratings of Lebanon on July 23, 2024

Source: S&P Global Ratings, Fitch Ratings, Moody's Ratings, CI Ratings, Byblos Research - The above figures are projections for 2026



SELECTED POLICY RATES

	Benchmark rate	Current (%)	Last meeting Date	Action	Next meeting
USA	Fed Funds Target Rate	3.75	28-Jan-26	No change	18-Mar-26
Eurozone	Refi Rate	2.15	05-Feb-26	No change	19-Mar-26
UK	Bank Rate	3.75	05-Feb-26	No change	19-Mar-26
Japan	O/N Call Rate	0.75	23-Jan-26	No change	19-Mar-26
Australia	Cash Rate	3.85	03-Feb-26	Raised 25bps	17-Mar-26
New Zealand	Cash Rate	2.25	19-Feb-26	No change	08-Apr-26
Switzerland	SNB Policy Rate	0.00	11-Dec-25	No change	19-Mar-26
Canada	Overnight rate	2.25	28-Jan-26	No change	18-Mar-26
Emerging Markets					
China	One-year Loan Prime Rate	3.00	24-Feb-26	No change	20-Mar-26
Hong Kong	Base Rate	4.00	11-Dec-25	Cut 25bps	N/A
Taiwan	Discount Rate	2.00	18-Dec-25	No change	19-Mar-26
South Korea	Base Rate	2.50	26-Feb-26	No change	10-Apr-26
Malaysia	O/N Policy Rate	2.75	22-Jan-26	No change	05-Mar-26
Thailand	1D Repo	1.00	25-Feb-26	Cut 25bps	29-Apr-26
India	Repo Rate	5.25	06-Feb-26	No change	N/A
UAE	Base Rate	3.65	10-Dec-25	Cut 25bps	N/A
Saudi Arabia	Repo Rate	4.25	10-Dec-25	Cut 25bps	N/A
Egypt	Overnight Deposit	19.00	12-Feb-26	Cut 100bps	02-Apr-26
Jordan	CBJ Main Rate	6.00	02-Nov-25	Cut 50bps	N/A
Türkiye	Repo Rate	37.00	22-Jan-26	Cut 100bps	12-Mar-26
South Africa	Repo Rate	6.75	29-Jan-26	No change	26-Mar-26
Kenya	Central Bank Rate	8.75	10-Feb-26	Cut 25bps	N/A
Nigeria	Monetary Policy Rate	26.50	24-Feb-26	Cut 25bps	20-Mar-26
Ghana	Prime Rate	15.50	28-Jan-26	Cut 250bps	18-Mar-26
Angola	Base Rate	17.50	14-Jan-26	Cut 100bps	12-Mar-26
Mexico	Target Rate	7.00	05-Feb-26	No change	26-Mar-26
Brazil	Selic Rate	15.00	28-Jan-26	No change	N/A
Armenia	Refi Rate	6.50	03-Feb-26	No change	17-Mar-26
Romania	Policy Rate	6.50	17-Feb-26	No change	07-Apr-26
Bulgaria	Base Interest	1.81	01-Dec-25	Raised 1bp	N/A
Kazakhstan	Repo Rate	18.00	23-Jan-26	No change	06-Mar-26
Ukraine	Discount Rate	15.00	29-Jan-26	Cut 50bps	19-Mar-26
Russia	Refi Rate	16.00	19-Dec-25	Cut 50bps	20-Mar-26



Economic Research & Analysis Department
Byblos Bank Group
P.O. Box 11-5605
Beirut - Lebanon
Tel: (+961) 1 338 100
Fax: (+961) 1 217 774
E-mail: research@byblosbank.com.lb
www.byblosbank.com

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BYBLOS BANK GROUP

LEBANON

Byblos Bank S.A.L
Achrafieh - Beirut
Elias Sarkis Avenue - Byblos Bank Tower
P.O.Box: 11-5605 Riad El Solh - Beirut 1107 2811- Lebanon
Phone: (+ 961) 1 335200
Fax: (+ 961) 1 339436

IRAQ

Erbil Branch, Kurdistan, Iraq
Street 60, Near Sports Stadium
P.O.Box: 34 - 0383 Erbil - Iraq
Phone: (+ 964) 66 2233457/8/9 - 2560017/9
E-mail: erbilbranch@byblosbank.com.lb

Sulaymaniyah Branch, Kurdistan, Iraq
Salem street, Kurdistan Mall - Sulaymaniyah
Phone: (+ 964) 773 042 1010 / (+ 964) 773 041 1010

Baghdad Branch, Iraq
Al Karrada - Salman Faeq Street
Al Wahda District, No. 904/14, Facing Al Shuruk Building
P.O.Box: 3085 Badalat Al Olwiya – Iraq
Phone: (+ 964) 770 6527807 / (+ 964) 780 9133031/2
E-mail: baghdadbranch@byblosbank.com.lb

Basra Branch, Iraq
Intersection of July 14th, Manawi Basha Street, Al Basra – Iraq
Phone: (+ 964) 770 4931900 / (+ 964) 770 4931919
E-mail: basrabranch@byblosbank.com.lb

ARMENIA

Byblos Bank Armenia CJSC
18/3 Amiryan Street - Area 0002
Yerevan - Republic of Armenia
Phone: (+ 374) 10 530362 Fax: (+ 374) 10 535296
E-mail: infoarm@byblosbank.com

BELGIUM

Byblos Bank Europe S.A.
Brussels Head Office
Boulevard Bischoffsheim 1-8
1000 Brussels
Phone: (+ 32) 2 551 00 20
Fax: (+ 32) 2 513 05 26
E-mail: byblos.europe@byblosbankeur.com

UNITED KINGDOM

Byblos Bank Europe S.A., London Branch
Berkeley Square House
Berkeley Square
GB - London W1J 6BS - United Kingdom
Phone: (+ 44) 20 7518 8100
Fax: (+ 44) 20 7518 8129
E-mail: byblos.london@byblosbankeur.com

FRANCE

Byblos Bank Europe S.A., Paris Branch
15 Rue Lord Byron
F- 75008 Paris - France
Phone: (+33) 1 45 63 10 01
Fax: (+33) 1 45 61 15 77
E-mail: byblos.europe@byblosbankeur.com

NIGERIA

Byblos Bank Nigeria Representative Office
161C Rafu Taylor Close - Off Idejo Street
Victoria Island, Lagos - Nigeria
Phone: (+ 234) 706 112 5800
(+ 234) 808 839 9122
E-mail: nigeriarepresentativeoffice@byblosbank.com.lb

ADIR INSURANCE

Dora Highway - Aya Commercial Center
P.O.Box: 90-1446
Jdeidet El Metn - 1202 2119 Lebanon
Phone: (+ 961) 1 256290
Fax: (+ 961) 1 256293

