Let us start by wishing you and a very healthy, happy and prosperous new year. Be sure that all our Wealth Management teams keep on working hard to contribute to the prosperous side of things, in a new working week. This daily publication will be released from Monday to Friday, from now on.

2021 just ended, and it was another positive year for investments. Cyclical assets surged: stocks from developed markets returned almost +22%, second only to listed real estate at +27%. To illustrate, the US S&P500 printed no less than 70 all-time highs last year. By contrast, the fixed income asset class was negative across segments, especially for the most defensive ones, as interest rates and inflation materially rose. This impacted the price of gold, down -3.6%. Finally, stocks from emerging markets were disappointing with a -2.5% negative return, almost exclusively due to China. Other emerging countries did better, and the GCC markets was a brilliant outlier with a +40% return, leading the EM complex by far. Against this backdrop, our cautious, moderate and aggressive profiles delivered respectively +2.4%, +4.2% and +7.6%. Our tactical allocations outperformed our strategic portfolios, validating our active positioning – especially our constant overweight on stocks versus bonds. We however underperformed competition. Compared to international peers, we gave back part of our spectacular 2020 outperformance, due to our capital preservation goals which led us to having more weight in defensive assets than our peers. We also held, and still hold, a larger allocation to emerging markets in our strategic allocations, due to incomparably better long-term prospects, at the price of more volatility.
That was for the year, and its last month ended on a positive note as well. Indeed, despite the record global infections from Omicron, all major asset classes delivered positive returns in December, with the only exception being government bonds from developed countries, down -0.5%. The US 10-year Treasury yield ended the month at 1.51%, which is 60 basis points higher than a year ago. The latest Consumer Price Index year-on-year progression is close to 7%, which compares to 1.4% at the end of 2020. Energy has obviously been a strong contributor to inflation: the price of Brent crude oil added more than $20 in a year, from $56 to $78. Last week was the fifth positive one for oil, recovering from the initial drop when Omicron broke out. Finally but not anecdotally, global stocks are at record levels in virtually every developed market, and the rally was broad, led by energy, technology, financials and real estate. Of course, this was backed by a parabolic earnings growth, which mitigated the rise in valuation multiples. But still: elevated valuations create vulnerability, and there will be no shortage of concerns to trigger anxiety and volatility episodes in 2022. The backdrop remains reasonably constructive. First, the recovery still has legs: global growth in 2022 will decelerate but is still expected to be one of the fastest in decades. Second, the virus might actually be weakening: no doubt, Omicron spreads like no other variant before, puts intense pressure on healthcare systems, and will likely slow activity in the near-term. However, it’s not unreasonable to think that this situation only enhances our ability to fight back and live with the virus. It may not be the last variant, but defeating it may be a decisive win in the war to restore normality. To that extent, 2022 looks set to be a pivotal year for the world. Alas, when it comes to investments, uncertainty rhymes with volatility. Are market participants ready for high infection numbers, combining with higher inflation and higher risk of policy miscalculation? This is why, in full transparency, we start 2022 with less conviction than a year ago. “Investing in the Age of Magic Money” was a clear procyclical theme. In 2022, the road ahead is now more foggy, in a year of economic and political transition. We are getting ready to be, this time, probably more reactive than proactive: taking advantage of market adjustments rather than predicting them. We will formally issue our 2022 Outlook later this month. This is later than most of our international competitors, for a loud and clear reason: we do not speak about the new year without reporting on what we factually delivered during the previous one. You can’t do that if you issue your yearly outlook in November – sometimes without even mentioning the Omicron variant.

As we write this morning, many markets in Asia are closed for a holiday, and the ones which are not paint a mixed picture, in thin trading. South Korea and Taiwan are slightly up while Hong-Kong is down -0.6%. Futures on Western stock markets are firm. All eyes are on the virus, even if Asia seems to be less affected than the West. While the number of daily new cases is simply unprecedented in the US and in Europe, so far hospitals are not saturated, validating the idea that this variant is less severe especially among vaccinated people. Still, a lower percentage of severe cases applied to stellar infections count still means a large number, and disruptions are already here, from flight cancellations to work and study from home. In the corporate world, Tesla is making headlines with a record number of worldwide car deliveries in Q4: more than 300,000, which means that total sales for 2021 were just below a million vehicles.

The week ahead will be extremely rich in economic data. We will closely watch all PMI and ISM releases, starting today with India’s PMI from Markit calculations, just out at a solid 57.6. China will follow tomorrow, before the US and Eurozone. The week will end with the US monthly job report on Friday and next week the US Consumer Price Index will be closely watched.

Stay safe.

MAURICE GRAVIER
Chief Investment Officer
Wealth Management
Emirates NBD
DISCLAIMER

Reliability
Emirates NBD Bank PSC ("Emirates NBD") uses reasonable efforts to obtain information from sources which it believes to be reliable, however, Emirates NBD makes no representation that the information or opinions contained in this publication are accurate, reliable or complete and should not be relied on as such or acted upon without further verification. Opinions, estimates and expressions of judgment are those of the writer and are subject to change without notice. Emirates NBD accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any loss or damage caused by any act or omission taken as a result of the information contained in this publication. Data/information provided herein are intended to serve for illustrative purposes and are not designed to initiate or conclude any transaction. In addition this publication is prepared as of a particular date and time and will not reflect subsequent changes in the market or changes in any other factors relevant to the determination of whether a particular investment activity is advisable. This publication may include data/information taken from stock exchanges and other sources from around the world and Emirates NBD does not guarantee the sequence, accuracy, completeness, or timeliness provided thereto by unaffiliated third parties. Moreover, the provision of certain data/information in this publication is subject to the terms and conditions of other agreements to which Emirates NBD is a party. Anyone proposing to rely on or use the information contained in this publication should independently verify and check the accuracy, completeness, reliability and suitability of the information and should obtain independent and specific advice from appropriate professionals or experts. Further, references to any financial instrument or investment product are not intended to imply that an actual trading market exists for such instrument or product. The information and opinions contained in Emirates NBD publications are provided for personal use and informational purposes only and are subject to change without notice. The material and information found in this publication are for general circulation only and have not been prepared with any regard to the objectives, financial situation and particular needs of any specific person, wherever situated.

Confidentiality
This publication is provided to you upon request on a confidential basis for informational purposes only and is not intended for trading purposes or to be passed on or disclosed to any other person and/or to any jurisdiction that would render the distribution illegal. The investor may not offer any part of this publication for sale or distribute it over any medium including but not limited to over-the-air television or radio broadcast, a computer network or hyperlink framing on the internet without the prior written consent of Emirates NBD or construct a database of any kind.

Solicitation
None of the content in this publication constitutes a solicitation, offer, opinion, or recommendation by Emirates NBD to buy or sell any security, or to provide legal, tax, accounting, or investment advice or services regarding the profitability or suitability of any security or investment and further does not provide any fiduciary or financial advice.

Third party
The security or investment described in this publication may not be eligible for sale or subscription to certain categories of investors. This publication is not intended for use by, or distribution to, any person or entity in any jurisdiction or country where such use or distribution would be contrary to law or regulation. It is the responsibility of any person in possession of this publication to investigate and observe all applicable laws and regulations of the relevant jurisdiction. This publication may not be conveyed to or used by a third party without the express consent of Emirates NBD. The investor may not use the data in this publication in any way to improve the quality of any data sold or contributed to by the investor to any third party.

Liability
Anything to the contrary herein set forth notwithstanding, Emirates NBD, its suppliers, agents, directors, officers, employees, representatives, successors, assigns, affiliates or subsidiaries shall not, directly or indirectly, be liable, in any way, to you or any other person for any: (a) inaccuracies or errors in or omissions from the this publication including, but not limited to, quotes and financial data; or (b) loss or damage arising from the use of this publication, including, but not limited to any investment decision occasioned thereby. Under no circumstances, including but not limited to negligence, shall Emirates NBD, its suppliers, agents, directors, officers, employees, representatives, successors, assigns, affiliates or subsidiaries be liable to you for direct, indirect, incidental, consequential, special, punitive, or exemplary damages even if Emirates NBD has been advised specifically of the possibility of such damages, arising from the use of this publication, including but not limited to, loss of revenue, opportunity, or anticipated profits or lost business. This publication does not provide individually tailored investment advice and is prepared without regard to the individual financial circumstances and objectives of person who receive it. The appropriateness of an investment activity or strategy will depend on the person’s individual circumstances and objectives and these activities may not be suitable for all persons. In addition, before entering into any transaction, the risks should be fully understood and a determination made as to whether a transaction is appropriate given the person’s investment objectives, financial and operational resources, experiences and other relevant circumstances. The obligating relating to a particular transaction (and contractual relationship) including, without limitation, the nature and extent of their exposure to risk should be known as well as any regulatory requirements and restrictions applicable thereto.

Forward looking
Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance and should not be seen as an indication of future performance of any investment activity. The information contained in this publication does not purport to contain all matters relevant to any particular investment or financial instrument and all statements as to future matters are not guaranteed to be accurate. Certain matters in this publication about the future performance of Emirates NBD or members of its group (the Group), including without limitation, future revenues, earnings, strategies, prospects and all other statements that are not purely historical, constitute "forward-looking statements". Such forward-looking statements are based on current expectations or beliefs, as well as assumptions about future events, made from information currently available. Forward-looking statements often use words such as "anticipate", "target", "expect", "estimate", "intend", "plan", "goal", "seek", "believe", "will", "may", "should", "would", "could" or other words of similar meaning. Undue reliance should not be placed on any such statements in making an investment decision, as forward-looking statements, by their nature, are subject to known and unknown risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results, as well as the Group’s plans and objectives, to differ materially from those expressed or implied in the forward-looking statements. Estimates of future performance are based on assumptions that may not be realized.
DISCLAIMER

Risk

Data included in this publication may rely on models that do not reflect or take into account all potentially significant factors such as market risk, liquidity risk, and credit risk. Emirates NBD may use different models, make valuation adjustments, or use different methodologies when determining prices at which Emirates NBD is willing to trade financial instruments and/or when valuing its own inventory positions for its books and records.

The use of this publication is at the sole risk of the investor and this publication and anything contained herein, is provided "as is" and "as available." Emirates NBD makes no warranty of any kind, express or implied, as to this publication, including, but not limited to, merchantability, non-infringement, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or use.

Investment in financial instruments involves risks and returns may vary. The value of and income from your investments may vary because of changes in interest rates, foreign exchange rates, prices and other factors and there is the possibility that you may lose the principle amount invested. Before making an investment, investors should consult their advisers on the legal, regulatory, tax, business, investment, financial and accounting implications of the investment.

In receiving this publication, the investor acknowledges it is fully aware that there are risks associated with investment activities. Moreover, the responsibility to obtain and carefully read and understand the content of documents relating to any investment activity described in this publication and to seek separate, independent financial advice if required to assess whether a particular investment activity described herein is suitable, lies exclusively with the investor.

Intellectual property

This publication has been developed, compiled, prepared, revised, selected, and arranged by Emirates NBD and others (including certain other information sources) through the application of methods and standards of judgment developed and applied through the expenditure of substantial time, effort, and money and constitutes valuable intellectual property of Emirates NBD and such others.

All present and future rights in and to trade secrets, patents, copyrights, trademarks, service marks, know-how, and other proprietary rights of any type under the laws of any governmental authority, domestic or foreign, shall, as between the investor and Emirates NBD, at all times be and remain the sole and exclusive property of Emirates NBD and/or other lawful parties. Except as specifically permitted in writing, the investor may not copy or make any use of the content of this publication or any portion thereof. Except as specifically permitted in writing, the investor shall not use the intellectual property rights connected with this publication, or the names of any individual participant in, or contributor to, the content of this publication, or any variations or derivatives thereof, for any purpose.

This publication is intended solely for non-commercial use and benefit, and not for resale or other transfer or disposition to, or use by or for the benefit of, any other person or entity. By accepting this publication, the investor agrees not to use, transfer, distribute, copy, reproduce, publish, display, modify, create, or dispose of any information contained in this publication in any manner that could compete with the business interests of Emirates NBD.

Furthermore, the investor may not use any of the trademarks, trade names, service marks, copyrights, or logos of Emirates NBD or its subsidiaries in any manner which creates the impression that such items belong to or are associated with the investor or, except as otherwise provided with Emirates NBD, prior written consent. The investor has no ownership rights in and to any of such items.

Emirates NBD is licensed and regulated by the UAE Central Bank.

United Kingdom

This publication was prepared by Emirates NBD Bank PJSC in the United Arab Emirates. It has been issued and approved for distribution to clients by the London branch of Emirates NBD Bank PJSC which is authorized by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority in the UK. Some investments and services are not available to clients of the London Branch. Any services provided by Emirates NBD Bank PJSC outside the UK will not be regulated by the FCA and you will not receive all the protections afforded to retail customers under the FCA regime, such as the Financial Ombudsman Service and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. Changes in foreign exchange rates may affect any of the returns or income set out within this publication.

Singapore

This publication was prepared by Emirates NBD Bank PJSC in the United Arab Emirates. It has been issued and approved for distribution to clients by the Singapore branch of Emirates NBD Bank PJSC which is licensed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and subject to applicable laws (including the Financial Advisers Act (FAA) and the Securities and Futures Act (SFA). Any services provided by Emirates NBD Bank PJSC outside Singapore will not be regulated by the MAS or subject to the provisions of the FAA and/or SFA, and you will not receive all the protections afforded to retail customers under the FAA and/or SFA. Changes in foreign exchange rates may affect any of the returns or income set out within this publication.

Please contact your Relationship Manager for further details or for clarification of the contents, where appropriate.

For contact information, please visit www.emiratesnbd.com