

## GCC Equity Market Outlook

March-2020

### Global equity markets decline on rising COVID-19 impact fears...

Stock markets across the globe posted one of the biggest single day declines since the 2008 financial crisis highlighting waning confidence and nervousness among investors. The MSCI World index dropped 7.2% on 9-March-2020, the biggest single day drop for the index on record, as global investors lost almost USD 1.4 Trillion during the day. The selling pressure since the start of 2020 has wiped off more than USD 8.4 Trillion in investor wealth globally, as almost all the key world indices were down double digits since the start of the year.

### GCC equities followed global market cues; but sell-off was more due to oil market logjam

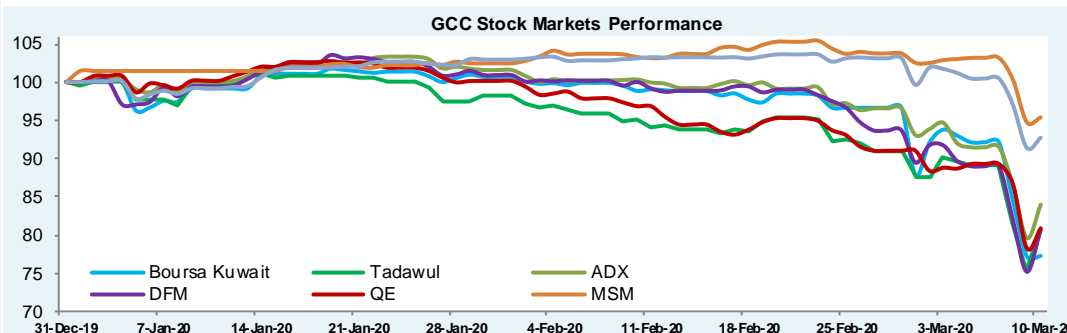
GCC markets followed global trends but the 25% decline in oil prices, the biggest single day drop since the 1991 Gulf war, came as a double blow for the oil exporters in the region as the growth in oil production comes at a time when world oil demand is under severe pressure due to the COVID-19. The MSCI GCC Index declined by 8.9% on 9-March-2020 after declining by 7.4% during the previous day, resulting in two of the biggest single-day declines on record for the GCC market. The aggregate GCC market-cap declined by USD 162 Bn on 9-Mar-2020 pushing YTD-2020 decline to more than USD 600 Bn.

### GCC equity market opportunities emerge as economic drivers continue to rebalance

GCC equity markets are currently pricing in two elements 1) Current lower oil prices persisting as the new normal and impacting GCC economic fundamentals permanently 2) COVID-19 continuing to dislocate full earnings potential of GCC listed companies. We expect oil prices to recover from the lows of Mar-2020 in two waves; the first when there is initial evidence on a renewed agreement on oil production levels being reached from OPEC+ countries, in particular Saudi Arabia and Russia. The second wave of gains in oil prices would come from early signaling of a recovery of global economic trade and other high frequency economic data when the impact of COVID-19 starts dissipating.

Moreover, we do expect GCC countries to expedite their transformation roadmaps aimed at diversification, once business as usual is back, and look at funding their fiscal spending and deficits, via the various tools at their disposal. The lower interest rates post the rate cut from Fed should allow more GCC debt issuances - both conventional and sukuks while other funding options like privatization, listing and partial sale of state-owned assets and ample FX reserves remain available. For GCC equities, we believe investor expectations will now be more focused on the pace of business recovery for frontline stocks and sector leaders with solid balance sheets in H2-2020, and 2021 earnings expectations. Currently, investors can play the dividend opportunities that have emerged (>5% dividend yields), with certain dividend record dates beyond 15 Mar-2020. High quality mid-cap names are also available at attractive price levels in our view.

GCC Equity Markets	Index Closing	MTD Chg%	YTD Chg%	M-Cap (USD Bn)	P/E (x) TTM	P/B (x) TTM	Div. Yield
Kuwait - Premier Market	5,174.3	(23.1%)	(25.8%)	91.7	13.0	1.2	4.3%
Kuwait - Main Market	4,227.6	(11.4%)	(13.9%)				
Kuwait - All Share	4,854.4	(20.1%)	(22.7%)				
Saudi Arabia	6,671.3	(11.4%)	(19.4%)	2,101.2	14.4	1.5	4.0%
Abu Dhabi	4,262.6	(13.0%)	(16.0%)	128.3	10.2	1.0	6.1%
Dubai	2,231.1	(13.9%)	(19.3%)	86.2	5.3	0.7	6.0%
Qatar	8,433.0	(11.1%)	(19.1%)	127.7	11.4	1.1	4.8%
Bahrain	1,493.3	(10.1%)	(7.3%)	22.9	11.1	0.8	5.2%
Oman	3,797.9	(8.1%)	(4.6%)	16.3	7.7	0.7	7.4%
<b>Total GCC</b>				<b>2,574.4</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>4.3%</b>



Source: GCC Stock Exchanges, Kamco Invest Research. Data in this report is as of market close 10-March-2020.

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### Global Equity Market Update

The spread of the COVID-19 continues to be one of the key reason for the decline in world markets that got amplified with the steep fall in oil prices after Russia stepped out for the OPEC+ agreement. The virus, that is believed to have started from China, is seen spreading especially in European countries as the global case tally has now surpassed the 100,000 mark. This was reflected in the 19.3% YTD-2020 decline in the DJ Stoxx 600 index that tracks European stock markets, one of the biggest regional market decliners this year. The biggest collapse was reported in Italy with the stock market declining 11% in a single day as the country has so far reported the highest number of coronavirus cases outside China and has now declared a complete lock down.

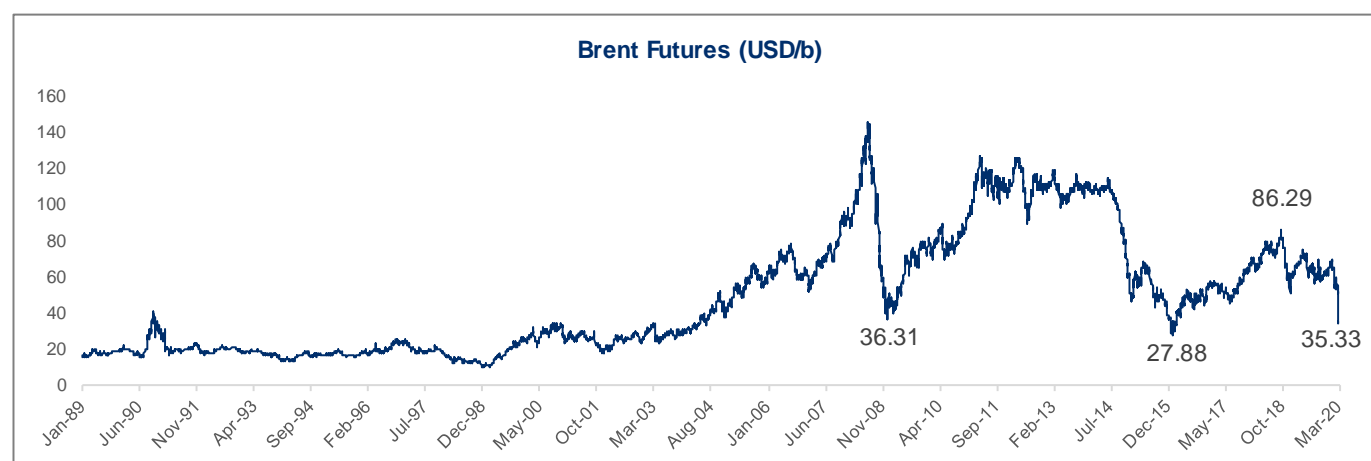
Other key global markets were also affected with the rising number of cases. The S&P 500 benchmark declined by 10.8% this year slightly better than the MSCI Asia Pacific index that declined by 11.5%. The MSCI Emerging Market index has declined 13.5% until 10-Mar-2020 reflecting heightened concerns in the emerging market universe.

Global Equities YTD-2020 Performance	
World	-13.0%
China	-1.6%
Asia	-11.5%
Europe	-19.3%
Emerging Markets	-13.5%
U.S.A	-10.8%
UK	-21.0%
Germany	-20.9%
Japan	-17.2%
MSCI GCC	-21.1%

Source: Bloomberg, Kamco Invest Research

### Oil Market Dynamics

Crude oil prices reached the lowest level in almost 5 years after OPEC+ members failed to reach an agreement to deepen oil production cuts in response to lackluster demand trends. As per the original plan, OPEC proposed to deepen cuts to 3.6 mb/d from the current 2.1 mb/d with OPEC producers sharing 1 mb/d of extra curbs and Russia and other non-OPEC producers sharing the remaining 0.5 mb/d until the end of 2020. As the plan failed, there are reports that producers would produce without curbs and there would be an unrestricted supply of crude oil in the oil market. This will severely impact the budgets of oil producing GCC nations with oil revenues expected to get severely affected due to the crash in oil prices. However, shale producers in the US would also face severe challenges as the industry continues to reel under declining well productivity and has seen sharp cut in spending by major oil exploration and production companies.



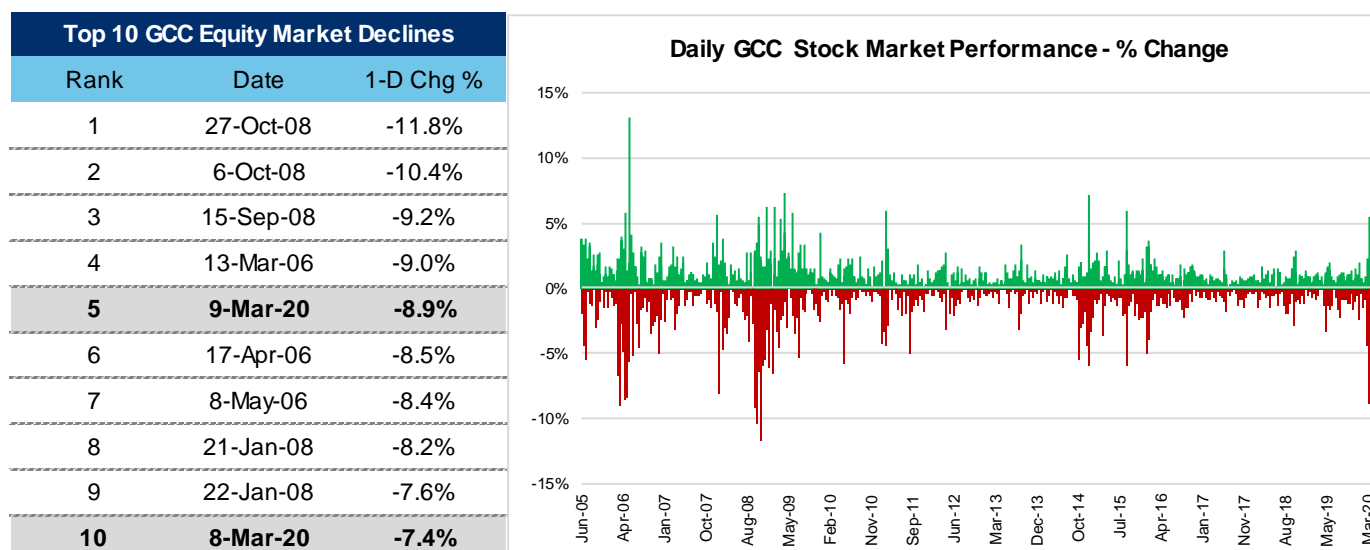
Source: Bloomberg, Kamco Invest Research

According to Reuters, OPEC producers could lose around USD 500 Mn in revenues a day due to the collapse in oil prices. Oil prices recovered around 6% after the fall but all eyes are on the production figures in the near term. Nevertheless, as per the latest reports, both OPEC and Russia may still announce some of strategy to deal with the collapse in oil price in the near term. On the other hand, the economic impact of the decline in oil prices is expected to be partly offset by the expected growth in production as OPEC countries have a spare capacity of around 5.7 mb/d. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait account for almost half of the current spare capacity, and this excludes the 0.5 mb/d production from the recently announced neutral zone agreement between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

On the other hand, demand is expected to be much stronger during the second half of the year as the impact of coronavirus wanes gradually as well as lower prices push demand in key oil consuming countries. Based on recent reports that the cases of virus have started declining in China, the expected rebound in economic growth will also push oil demand towards the end of the year. A Bloomberg report highlighted that demand from of the biggest Asian oil consumers have increased by almost 50% after the offered crude prices were slashed.

## GCC Equities

In terms of GCC sector performance, there was a broad-based sell-off across sectors. Notably, defensive sectors remained relatively insulated with the smallest YTD-2020 declines. Sectors like Consumers, Food & Beverage and Healthcare reported decline of around 10%. On the other hand, Basic Materials sector, including companies in the Petrochemicals and Mining sector, and Energy stocks, have witnessed the steepest declines.



Source: Thomson Reuters, Kamco Invest Research, Bank Financials.

The impact on the banking sector was also noticeable with a decline of 19.5% slightly higher than the 17.7% decline for the Real Estate index. The Banking sector declined despite reporting healthy growth in earnings during 2019 as compared to 2018, highlighting the pressure from an economic point of view.

## GCC banking sector near term challenges

Banks listed on GCC exchanges reported healthy growth in net profits during 2019 vs. 2018. Barring Oman, the banking sector in the rest of the GCC exchanges reported an increase in full year net profits during 2019 resulting in an aggregate increase of 16% during the year for the 56 banks that reported earnings. Banks in Saudi Arabia reported the biggest increase during the year with a y-o-y growth of 39.5%. However, the events in the last few weeks could cloud the near term outlook for the sector and can potentially dent the growth story for the banking sector in the GCC. Firstly, the recent lowering of interest by the US Fed by 50 bps followed by a similar reaction by most of the GCC central banks could directly impact net interest income for the banking sector and lower NIMs.

GCC Bank - Net Profits (USD Bn)	2018	2019	Y-o-Y %
Saudi Arabia	8.4	11.8	39.5%
United Arab Emirates	10.2	11.5	12.5%
Qatar	6.4	6.8	5.5%
Kuwait	3.2	3.2	-0.3%
Bahrain	1.4	1.5	0.8%
Oman	0.8	0.7	-7.5%
<b>Total Net Profit</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>16.0%</b>

Source: Thomson Reuters, Kamco Invest Research, Bank Financials.

In addition, the rout in oil prices with Brent crude falling to levels last seen in 2015 would severely affect project market activity in the region as governments would prioritize spending only on key projects and may defer or shelve other non-critical projects, as seen during the last oil price rout. A decline in project activity in the region could in turn affect credit off take from the banking sector by private players. On the other hand, the decline in oil earnings could also affect customer deposits with the banks, as seen during the last rout, thereby putting further pressure on lending capacity, although a majority of the banks have low loan-to-deposit ratios. Overall, with a decline in economic growth rates, businesses would be reluctant to invest in new ventures and focus on only the existing projects.

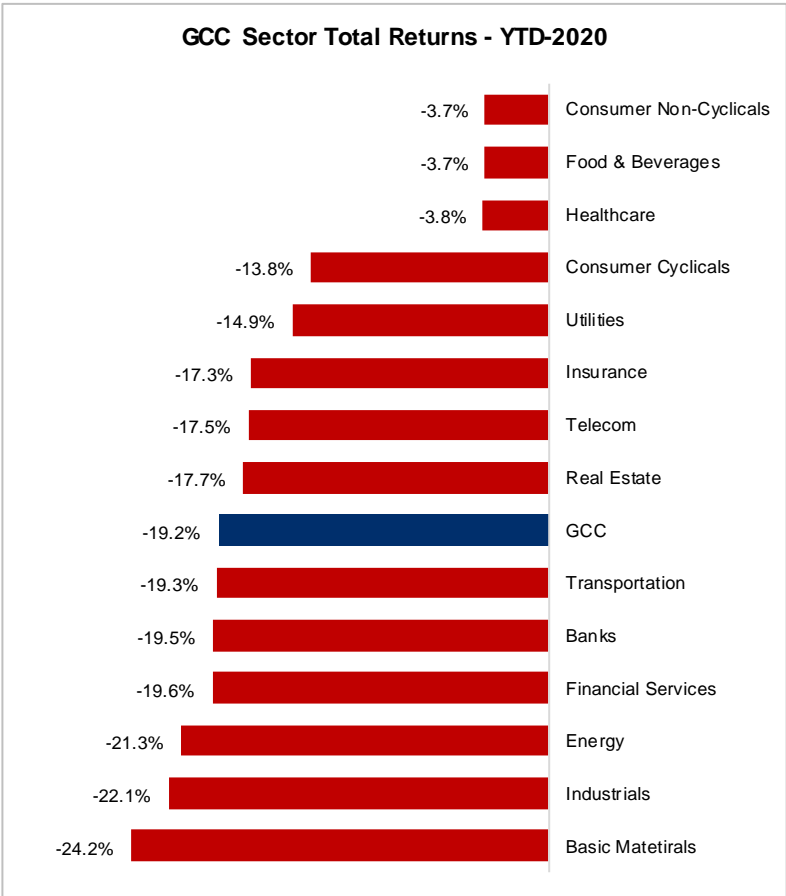
Furthermore, as the real estate sector reels under oversupply concerns and declining property prices, the high exposure of banks to the sector makes them vulnerable. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, a majority of the banks are well capitalized and post recent consolidation in the sector there is increased efficiency along with additional confidence coming from vigorous regulatory oversight.

**GCC Equities Near-Term Outlook**

We expect GCC equity markets to remain volatile in the near term and prefer defensive sectors with relatively inelastic demand for their products and services combined with higher domestic revenue contribution. Our most preferred (defensive) and least preferred sectors over the near term are below:

**Most preferred (Defensive) sectors:**

- **Utilities:** Electric power, water and cooling related utilities companies will continue to see stable base demand, especially as residential demand and related revenue visibility will remain stable with the onset of summer. We prefer Utility stocks with high dividend yield profiles.
- **Telecoms:** Telecom operators with strong domestic customer base, domestic revenue contribution and those that are less exposed to intermittent demand from inbound tourism related data and roaming revenues would be relatively unaffected. However, stocks of Telecoms that have incurred additional capex for large scale government projects that could be potentially delayed could underperform its peers.
- **Consumer:** Within the Consumer sector, we are overweight on Education, Staple Food Producers and Healthcare service providers in the Consumer segment.



Source: Thomson Reuters Total Return Indices, Kamco Invest Research

- \* **Education:** Fees are paid upfront, and with near-term temporary shutdowns, institutions are likely to remain flexible, and should catchup with the delivery of their educational services via online tutoring and classes.
- \* **Staple Food Producers:** With travel likely to be limited, staple food producers are unlikely to witness lower demand, and on the other hand could potentially witness some marginal frontloaded demand on higher stocking of staple foods. Food producers with products having access to strong online networks will also be preferred.
- \* **Healthcare service providers:** Residents are likely to be more cautious and travel less in the coming summer holidays on fears of travel bans, while restrictions and a large spike in COVID-19 cases could potentially lead the government healthcare sector to utilize private healthcare service providers to curb the spread.

**Least preferred sectors:**

- **Airlines:** Lower passengers and yields will weigh on the Airline stocks in the GCC as aviation traffic slows down globally. Listed ground services and travel related catering stocks will also underperform.
- **Logistics:** Cross border logistics names will witness pressure from transportation restrictions and delays, however warehousing, and domestic express related revenues could remain more stable.
- **Consumer Discretionary:** Consumer discretionary companies will be weighed down by the outlook of both lower demand and supply chain shocks.
- **Real Estate, Construction, Hospitality & Leisure:** We are underweight on Real Estate & Construction names which are exposed to delays, cancellation of projects and supply chain risks of raw materials. Real Estate companies with Hospitality segments in their portfolio will likely underperform from lower occupancy rates and price competition on ADRs in order to secure occupancy rates. Mall operators will be impacted by lower footfalls, negotiation from tenants for lower turnover rents or potential lowering rents to support retailers. Retailers will look at online channels to secure sales. REITs with higher residential contribution are likely to be lesser affected than peers.

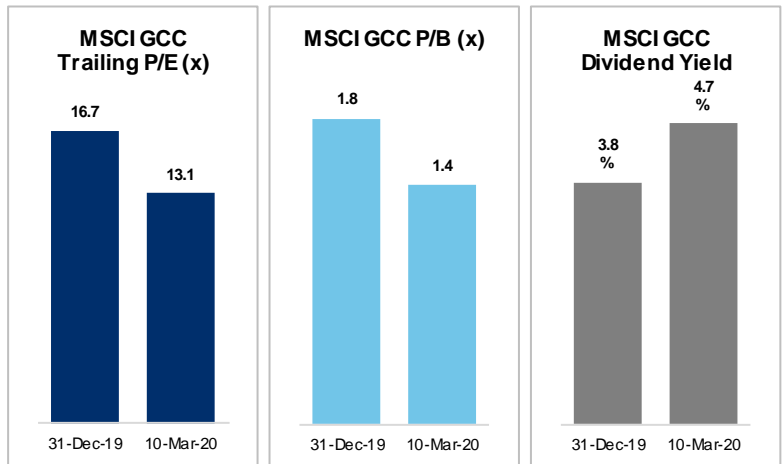
- **Capital goods & Industrials:** Capital Goods and Industrials companies will be affected by lower projects activity, and constrained mobility of distribution channels.
- **Banks:** Rate cuts following Fed’s emergency rate cut of 50 bps will translate into lower NIMs and earnings for GCC banks in 2020. Moreover, public sector project spending which drives the overall GCC economy could slowdown and translate into lower credit growth for banks in the region.
- **Insurance:** The sector could be impacted by lower margins from medical insurance segment, lower travel insurance revenues and lower profitability of investment portfolios.

**GCC equities opportunities & long term outlook**

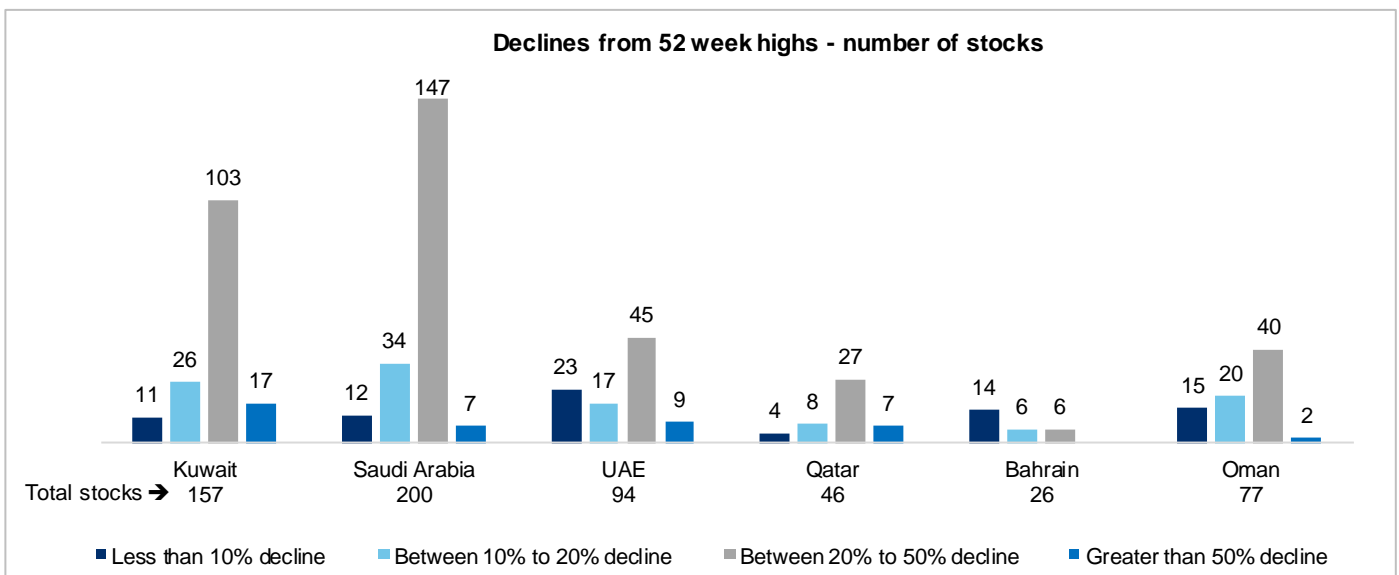
We believe that there are three routes for equity investors to play GCC markets going forward:

**Dividend play:** Equity investors can look to capture 2019 cash dividends, as yields look more attractive post the market correction. Moreover, based on our analysis, currently there are 26 stocks in the GCC offering a dividend yield of 5% or more with dividend record dates on or after 15 Mar-2020, and a minimum average daily value traded (ADVT) of USD 1 Mn (See page 6 details).

**Bottom-up stock selection:** We believe that the recent market correction offers ample opportunities for bottom-up stock picking and active investing, as roughly 61% of GCC stocks have declined by over 20%-50% from their 52 week-highs. These stocks include high quality mid-cap names that would have better earnings recovery visibility, once the market recovers, and investors could capitalize on the current lower prices to enter.



Source: Bloomberg, Kamco Invest Research



Source: Bloomberg, Kamco Invest Research

**Long term outlook:** Once the growing fears of the impact of COVID-19 begins to subside and oil market demand and supply visibility improves, we expect the share prices of sector leaders with strong balance sheets and working capital flexibility in aforementioned near term underperforming sectors to recover rapidly and outperform in H2-2020 on improved revenue visibility and unwinding of supply chain shocks. The demand side recovery for these companies could be driven by both a cyclical rebound in Q3-2020, and a resumption of cancelled and delayed project activity, led by credit offtake from the well-capitalized GCC banking sector. Investor expectations will also focus on 2021 normalized earnings expectations.

**GCC Dividend Opportunities Screen**

**Liquidity:** Minimum average daily value traded (ADVT) of USD 1.0 Mn.

**Dividend Yield:** ~ 5% or more

**Dividend Record Date:** 15-March-2020 and beyond

Company Name	Industry	Country	Price (LCL) 10-Mar	52-W High	52-W Low	Div. Yield (%)*	P/E	P/BV	M-Cap (USD Mn)	ADVT (USD Mn)	Decline from 52-W High	YTD-2020 Tot. Ret (%)
Alimtiq Investment	Div. Fin.	Kuwait	0.098	0.147	0.090	10.2%	5.1	0.5	365	1.5	-33.3%	-22.2%
Ooredoo Oman	Telecom	Oman	0.454	0.55	0.38	8.8%	8.7	1.1	768	2.1	-17.2%	-13.4%
Yanbu National Petrochemicals Co.	Materials	Saudi Arabia	44.600	75.00	40.10	7.8%	23.0	1.6	6,683	11.9	-40.5%	-20.2%
Aldar Properties	Real Estate	UAE	1.960	2.37	1.63	7.4%	7.8	0.6	4,196	5.1	-17.3%	-9.3%
Zain Kuwait	Telecom	Kuwait	0.450	0.604	0.432	7.3%	9.0	1.5	6,389	8.1	-25.5%	-25.0%
Human Soft	Cons. Serv.	Kuwait	2.801	3.500	2.500	7.1%	9.5	4.2	1,123	1.7	-20.0%	-7.0%
Saudi Airlines Catering Co.	Cons. Serv.	Saudi Arabia	78.100	105.00	72.00	7.1%	13.8	4.9	1,706	3.4	-25.6%	-24.0%
Banque Saudi Fransi	Banks	Saudi Arabia	28.200	43.65	27.65	7.1%	10.9	1.0	9,052	14.4	-35.4%	-25.6%
Samba Financial Group	Banks	Saudi Arabia	21.000	39.40	20.42	6.8%	10.5	0.9	11,189	18.2	-46.7%	-35.3%
ADNOC Distribution	Retailing	UAE	2.880	3.20	2.00	6.6%	16.2	9.6	9,802	1.6	-10.0%	-2.7%
Saudi Cement Co.	Materials	Saudi Arabia	53.100	79.90	47.70	6.6%	18.0	3.0	2,164	3.8	-33.5%	-24.3%
Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank	Banks	UAE	5.800	10.26	5.37	6.6%	8.0	0.7	10,987	8.5	-43.5%	-26.8%
National Commercial Bank	Banks	Saudi Arabia	36.000	64.40	34.05	6.4%	9.5	1.6	28,771	34.0	-44.1%	-26.9%
Riyadh Bank	Banks	Saudi Arabia	16.900	29.90	16.74	6.3%	9.1	1.2	13,506	17.4	-43.5%	-29.6%
Saudi Basic Industries Corporation	Materials	Saudi Arabia	69.500	128.00	63.50	6.3%	37.0	1.2	55,544	81.4	-45.7%	-26.0%
Advanced Petrochemical Co.	Materials	Saudi Arabia	41.000	57.55	37.30	6.3%	11.7	2.6	2,364	5.8	-28.8%	-17.0%
Burgan Bank	Banks	Kuwait	0.200	0.386	0.200	6.0%	8.3	0.6	1,723	3.0	-48.1%	-34.2%
Ahli United Bank	Banks	Bahrain	0.835	1.12	0.75	6.0%	10.5	1.5	7,327	1.5	-25.2%	-20.5%
Aamal Co.	Capital Goods	Qatar	0.670	1.06	0.58	6.0%	13.1	0.5	1,159	1.1	-36.7%	-17.6%
Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank	Banks	UAE	4.630	5.85	4.20	5.9%	7.6	0.9	4,579	3.8	-20.9%	-14.1%
Emirates Telecom	Telecom	UAE	13.820	17.80	13.48	5.8%	13.8	2.6	32,725	5.3	-22.4%	-15.5%
Aramex	Transportation	UAE	2.860	5.01	2.43	5.8%	8.4	1.6	1,140	2.7	-42.9%	-19.9%
Saudi British Bank	Banks	Saudi Arabia	22.000	42.50	20.64	5.5%	13.6	0.8	12,043	12.1	-48.2%	-36.6%
Al Rajhi Banking & Investment Co.	Banks	Saudi Arabia	56.700	76.90	51.20	5.3%	14.0	2.8	37,762	121.3	-26.3%	-13.3%
Qatar Electricity and Water Co.	Utilities	Qatar	14.870	17.45	13.52	5.2%	11.6	1.6	4,492	1.5	-14.8%	-7.6%
Saudi Telecom Co.	Telecom	Saudi Arabia	81.600	117.40	72.30	4.9%	15.2	2.6	43,476	29.8	-30.5%	-19.8%

Source: Bloomberg, Thomson Reuters, Kamco Invest Research

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