

## Morgan Stanley Investment Funds

# NextGen Emerging Markets Fund

**EMERGING MARKETS EQUITY TEAM**

### Performance Review

In the one month period ending 30 November 2024, the Fund's I shares returned 3.17% (net of fees)<sup>1</sup>, while the benchmark returned 0.13%.

Our underweight allocation to and stock selection in the Philippines contributed to returns, led by the zero allocations to SM Prime and Ayala Land.

The portfolio benefited from our allocations to IT services companies including EPAM and Grid Dynamics. EPAM raised its annual revenue forecasts in November on the back of strong demand for its IT services, particularly within the enterprise segment. After an extended slowdown in IT spending globally, the IT services industry is experiencing a pickup as companies look to improve efficiencies across cloud and artificial intelligence (AI) related capabilities. Last month, EPAM acquired FD Technologies to deepen its expertise within the financial services industry and deliver AI-enabled capabilities to clients in banking and capital markets across multiple regions, including the Asia-Pacific region.

Within Argentina, our allocation to Despegar contributed; the stock's outperformance continued in November after the company's October announcement that it would partner with digital banking platform Nubank. We believe the integration, combined with access to Nubank's large customer base, should create greater purchasing power while offering more convenience.

Our zero allocation to Romania added to returns during the month as the market underperformed the benchmark, driven by macro uncertainty surrounding the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Our positioning in Vietnam contributed, led by our allocation to IT services company FPT Corporation. FPT recently announced a partnership with global tech companies, including Nvidia, to open an AI research and development center in the country.

The portfolio's allocation to Emaar Properties in the UAE was among the top security contributors to returns. Emaar reported solid third quarter results driven by strong development in the country, which is expected to continue into 2025, especially as construction on the company's growing project pipeline begins.

Our overweight to and stock selection in Kazakhstan also added to returns, led by our allocations to Kazatomprom and Halyk Savings Bank.

Our zero allocations to Morocco and Iceland — which were among the top-performing markets in the benchmark in November — detracted from returns. Pakistan was the best-performing frontier emerging market, and while our overweight allocation there contributed (led by our allocation to Systems Limited), aggregate positioning detracted, impacted by our zero allocations to Habib Bank, Fauji Fertilizer and Bank Al Habib.

Our allocation to Sumber Alfaria Trijaya (Alfamart) in Indonesia also detracted. Alfamart reported third quarter results largely in line with investor expectations; however, the company's increased operating expenses could hamper forward-looking earnings expectations. We continue to believe Alfamart is a leading mini-market retailer and stands to benefit from the rise of the Indonesian consumer, especially with the approximately 6.5% minimum wage increase announced for 2025, which could shift mass-market consumer dynamics.

### Portfolio Activity

During the month we initiated a position in Jumia Technologies, a Pan-African e-commerce company with operations in Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire. The company is in the process of building out its e-commerce business in key markets on the African continent, and the new management team has set up the company to achieve substantial operating leverage in the future (after going through a painful adjustment period, including exiting unprofitable businesses and narrowing product focus). In the third quarter of 2024, the company raised \$100 million to buffer the balance sheet, invest in inventories and engage in selective marketing with a high return on investment. In addition, we believe Jumia can accelerate growth in order volumes over the coming three years, driven by relatively low e-commerce penetration rates, improving macro conditions in most key markets and the build-out of the supply-side marketplace (e.g., bringing in low-cost suppliers to close the gap between pricing and assortment). To fund this trade, we exited our position in Airtel Africa.

We also exited our position in Champ Resto, a fast casual restaurant chain operator in Indonesia. We increasingly lost conviction in management's ability to execute its growth plan, all while the competitive environment was increasing in intensity.

### Strategy and Outlook

We remain focused on investing in the next generation of global investment opportunities unfolding in large, overlooked frontier and small emerging markets. Our investment universe, including Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nigeria, is comprised of

<sup>1</sup> Source: Morgan Stanley Investment Management Limited. Data as of 30 November 2024.

countries with sizable, fast-growing consumer populations that are in the early stages of development. We think many of these markets are “hidden gems” and have largely been ignored by most investors. Many of these countries represent a small fraction of mainstream emerging markets and global equity indexes but provide less correlated returns at attractive valuations.

Our most recent research trip was to Egypt, a country that has been undergoing an economic adjustment and making much-needed reforms that are leading to interesting investment opportunities in a market trading at attractive valuations.

Egypt had been plagued by poor policy choices with a pegged currency and economic mismanagement, further exacerbated by a number of global shocks, including COVID, Ukraine, Gaza, high global interest rates and issues in the Suez Canal. This led to large fiscal and current account deficits, balance of payments issues, high inflation (food inflation reached a high of 70% last year),<sup>2</sup> negative real interest rates, and a massive spread between the official and parallel currency rates. The country has begun to take steps in the right direction with more orthodox monetary, fiscal and currency policies, including devaluing the currency over 50% and allowing it to float freely. The central bank has hiked rates by 600 basis points to 27.25%, and inflation continues to fall, down from 4.0% a year ago to 2.7% now as the economy slows and adjusts to higher rates.<sup>3</sup>

The country has also received significant support in the form of over \$60 billion in capital from the UAE (through the Ras El-Hekma land development project) and from international organizations including the International Monetary Fund, European Union and World Bank, allowing Egypt to build reserves, float the currency and service its debt. Tourism, an important source of revenue for the country, has been recovering after taking a hit from COVID and the conflict in Gaza. While on the ground, we saw firsthand how the tourism economy is booming; tourist arrivals in Egypt are back to their 2008 peak.

While there continue to be some risks around the current account deficit, currency intervention, underinvestment in energy and the military’s role in the economy, we welcome Egypt’s return to orthodox foreign exchange policy. We believe that recent moves, coupled with the massive inflow of money from partners, will likely help the country meet all its funding needs for the next three to five years, leading to currency stability. Within the portfolio we are invested in a high quality bank (which has continued to deliver on earnings across different macro environments) and a fintech company, and we continue to look for opportunities in top-tier businesses with strong management teams where we think earnings growth is undervalued and which we believe can benefit from an improving economic outlook.

**For further information, please contact your Morgan Stanley Investment Management representative.**

## Fund Facts

Launch date	16 October 2000
Base currency	Euro
Benchmark	Custom- Blended Benchmark Primary- MSCI Frontier Emerging Markets Net Index

## Calendar Year Returns (%)

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.

	YTD	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Class I Shares	15.59	5.14	-33.08	34.33	-5.56	24.26	-14.85	15.66	11.35	6.34	-7.09
Blended Benchmark	11.85	8.05	-23.06	26.97	-14.60	17.64	-11.81	9.40	23.53	-10.93	-3.41
MSCI Frontier Emerging Markets Net Index	11.85	8.05	-12.81	12.21	-10.70	16.19	-10.29	11.37	8.14	-8.99	22.07

All performance data is calculated NAV to NAV, net of fees, and does not take account of commissions and costs incurred on the issue and redemption of units. The sources for all performance and Index data is Morgan Stanley Investment Management. **Please visit our website [www.morganstanley.com/im](http://www.morganstanley.com/im) to see the latest performance returns for the fund’s other share classes.**

<sup>2</sup> Source: International Monetary Fund. Data as of 31 December 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Egypt Central Data Catalog (CAPMAS) September 2024.

## Share Class I Risk and Reward Profile

- The Fund may be impacted by movements in the exchange rates between the fund's currency and the currencies of the fund's investments.
- The Fund relies on other parties to fulfill certain services, investments or transactions. If these parties become insolvent, it may expose the fund to financial loss.
- Sustainability factors can pose risks to investments, for example: impact asset values, increased operational costs.
- There may be an insufficient number of buyers or sellers which may affect the fund's ability to buy or sell securities.
- Investment in China A-Shares via Shanghai-Hong Kong and Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect programs may also entail additional risks, such as risks linked to the ownership of shares.
- There are increased risks of investing in emerging markets as political, legal and operational systems may be less developed than in developed markets. Due to the nature of the markets in which the fund invests, there might be circumstances where the safekeeping and custody arrangements of the fund are not as secure as those of more developed markets.

- Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results. Returns may increase or decrease as a result of currency fluctuations. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and investors may lose all or a substantial portion of his or her investment.
- The value of the investments and the income from them will vary and there can be no assurance that the Fund will achieve its investment objectives.
- Investments may be in a variety of currencies and therefore changes in rates of exchange between currencies may cause the value of investments to decrease or increase. Furthermore, the value of investments may be adversely affected by fluctuations in exchange rates between the investor's reference currency and the base currency of the investments.

Please refer to the Prospectus for full risk disclosures. All data as of 30 November 2024 and subject to change daily.

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### INDEX INFORMATION

The **Blended Index** performance shown is calculated using the **MSCI EM Europe, Middle East Gross Index** from inception through 31 December 2000, the **MSCI EM Europe Middle East Net Index** through 16 April 2008, the **MSCI Emerging Europe, Middle East and Africa Net Index** through 15 May 2022 and the **MSCI Frontier Emerging Markets Net Index** thereafter.

The **MSCI EM Europe, Middle East Index** captures large and mid-cap representation across 8 Emerging Markets (EM) countries in Europe and Middle East.

The **MSCI Emerging Markets Europe, Middle East and Africa Net Index** is a free float-adjusted market capitalization weighted index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of the emerging market countries of Europe, the Middle East & Africa.

The **MSCI Frontier Emerging Markets Net Index** is a free float adjusted market capitalization index designed to serve as a benchmark covering all countries from the MSCI Frontier Markets Index and the lower size spectrum of the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

The indexes are unmanaged and do not include any expenses, fees or sales charges. It is not possible to invest directly in an index.

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