Comments on the impact of UAE being removed from the FATF grey list in The National, 24 Feb 2024

Dr. Nasser Saidi's comments appeared in an article in The National titled "UAE's removal from Financial Action Task Force's grey list to spur investor confidence" published on 24th February 2024.

The comments are posted below.

The immediate benefit would be an improvement in investors' trust and confidence in the UAE, leading to an increase in more sustainable capital, foreign direct investment and portfolio flows, according to Nasser Saidi, head of consultancy Nasser Saidi and Associates.

This move will also support the expansion of both the domestic banking and financial sectors as well as the international financial free zones, as wealthy global investors and foreign businesses become more comfortable investing in the UAE, given its adoption of international laws and conventions, he explained.

Another major beneficiary will be the asset and wealth management activities of UAE-based family offices, he said.

"The UAE's removal from the FATF grey list is a testament to the country's political will and willingness to improve overall governance, transparency and disclosure of the banking and financial sector, address weaknesses alongside increasing its ability to deter illicit money flows [via the Executive Office for Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing], enhancing its ability to undertake financial investigations and extraditions of financial criminals among

others," Mr Saidi added.
"However, it is important that the UAE continues on its journey in adopting and implementing international best practices and standards, continuously strengthening its financial regulatory regime, including AML/ CFT."

Comments on the impact of the war in Gaza on Lebanon in The National, 14 Feb 2024

Dr. Nasser Saidi's comments appeared in an article in The National titled "Lebanon's economy reels as cost of damages from Gaza war soar" published on 14th February 2024.

The comments are posted below.

Nasser Saidi, a former economy minister and deputy governor of Lebanon's central bank, told The National that the violence has caused extensive damage to buildings, infrastructure and private property, adding up to huge losses for Lebanon's already struggling economy. More than 65,000 people have been displaced in Lebanon because of the war. Trade, tourism, hospitality as well as agriculture and aviation are some of the sectors that have been hit hard.

"The direct attacks in the south of Lebanon heighten uncertainty, inflict damage and destruction to an already impoverished region of the country and inevitably augment the country's burdens," Mr Saidi, who is also head of consultancy Nasser Saidi and Associates, said.

"Already, Lebanon's four main economic pillars, trade and

tourism, health, education, banking and finance have been decimated by the ongoing crisis and lack of reforms. Not to mention the long-term scarring effects from the mass migration of Lebanon's human capital which will accelerate if there is an escalation or war in Lebanon."

The agriculture sector has been particularly affected by the fighting. "South Lebanon and Nabatieh are major agricultural hubs accounting for 21.5 per cent of Lebanon's cultivated areas and damage to the sector will result in loss of the means of livelihood and income," Mr Saidi said.

"Any escalation [in the conflict] to the wider nation would be disastrous for a country already reeling from political, economic, and social woes – rebuilding would likely take decades rather than years," Mr Saidi said.

Comments made during this interview were also included in [The National's Editorial on 16th February 2024].

"Disastrous", "decimated" and "impoverished" – these are just some of the words used by Nasser Saidi, a former economy minister and deputy governor of Lebanon's central bank, to describe his country's fragile state this week. In an interview with The National published on Wednesday, he outlined how Lebanon's economic problems – which the World Bank has called one of the worst global financial crises since the middle of the 19th century – were being exacerbated by the spreading violence of the Israel-Gaza war.
According to Mr Saidi, the escalation of the conflict will drive "mass migration" from Lebanon. Rebuilding would "likely take decades rather than years", he added.

Comments on Dubai's Indebtedness in Bloomberg, 17 Sep 2020

Dr. Nasser Saidi's comments appeared in the Bloomberg article titled "Dubai May Be as Indebted as South Africa If S&P Proves Right", published 17th September 2020.

Comments are posted below:

By drawing the line around what Dubai considers its direct liabilities, the government is sending a message that it won't be held responsible for other debt, said Nasser Saidi, who worked as chief economist of the Dubai International Financial Centre during the city's debt crisis. By contrast, rating companies have to adopt the view of an external investor, which means taking all liabilities into account.

"Creditors will always try to claim the sovereign guarantee," he said. "Claiming under a sovereign guarantee is less costly and potentially less protracted than trying to claim against companies."

When it comes to borrowings from commercial banks, Saidi said some of the money may be offset by government deposits, since there is usually a working relationship between authorities and lenders. Dubai's biggest bank, Emirates NBD PJSC, reported its aggregated sovereign loan exposure at almost 162 billion dirhams as of June 30.

The lesson of Dubai's brush with default in 2009 is that creditors failed to show the government's guarantee, but the risk of spillover and damage to the creditworthiness of the UAE as a whole prompted Abu Dhabi to intervene, Saidi said. Dubai has since set up a public debt office to monitor the borrowings of the GREs, especially their foreign-currency liabilities.