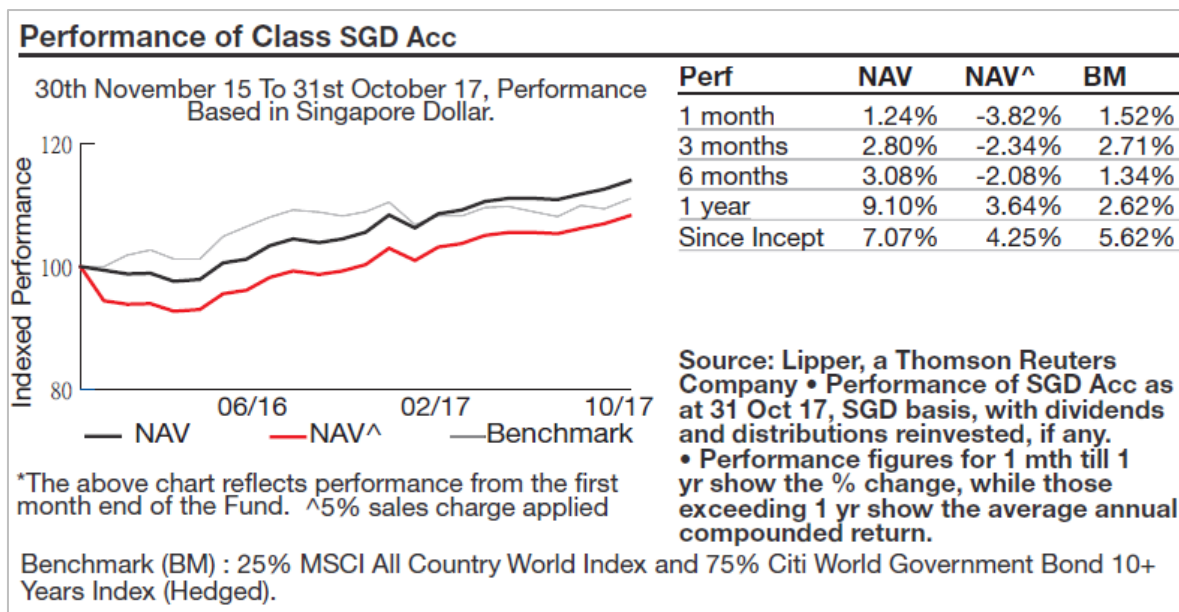


# United Income Focus Trust

## Fund Performance

The United Income Focus Trust (the “Fund”) gained 1.24%<sup>1</sup> in the month of October 2017 whilst its benchmark, the MSCI All Country World Index and Citi World Government Bond 10+ Years Index (Hedged) advanced 1.52%<sup>2</sup>. During the month, the Fund underperformed the benchmark by 28 basis points (bps).



## Market Review

Global economic data pointed to an ongoing synchronised global economic recovery, despite political unrest in Spain and the European Central Bank’s (ECB’s) monetary policy announcement. At the ECB’s October 2017 meeting, President Mario Draghi announced that the bank’s quantitative easing (QE) program will likely be extended through September 2018 but that the size of monthly asset purchases will be reduced starting in January 2018. In Spain, the Parliament of Catalonia unilaterally declared independence from the country. This led to the Spanish Senate in Madrid to grant Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy special constitutional powers to seize direct administrative control over the region, dissolve its parliament, and force a new election. Economic momentum in the US remained on solid footing as the impacts from hurricanes Harvey and Irma started to subside. Consumer sentiment surged to a 13-year high in October, while core consumer price index (CPI) remained flat as housing and medical costs moderated. Most global government yields fell during the month with the exception of the US. US front-end yields rose amid speculation of a slightly more hawkish next Fed Chair.

Equities were a key contributor to the fund’s performance (+61bps). The yield sensitive sectors such as Utilities (+38bps) led the pack as most global sovereign yields fell during the month. Information Technology (+25bps) also

<sup>1</sup> Source: Lipper, Performance from 30 September 2017 to 31 October 2017 in SGD terms, on a NAV (Net Asset Value) basis, with dividends and distributions reinvested (if any).

<sup>2</sup> Source: Lipper, Performance from 30 September 2017 to 31 October 2017 in SGD terms.

All statistics quoted in the write-up are sourced from Bloomberg as at 31 October 2017 unless otherwise stated.

## United Income Focus Trust

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outperformed driven by strong earnings. Telecommunication Services (-8bps) and Healthcare (-8bps) modestly detracted from performance.

Fixed income also contributed to the Fund's performance in October (+21bps). This was mainly driven by investment grade credit exposure (+15bps) as spreads tightened on the back of positive economic momentum. European financials (+9bps) also contributed to performance as the ECB announcement was widely viewed as marginally positive for risk assets.

### Outlook and Strategy

Across the month, the main event was the ECB meeting where, as widely anticipated, the ECB left interest rates unchanged, cut its asset purchase program from 60 billion euros to 30 billion euros a month, and announced that quantitative easing will continue until September 2018, or until there is indication that inflation is on a sustainable path towards the ECB's target level. Central banks seem well aware of the risks of withdrawing monetary stimulus and the need for a very gradual approach. Thus, we don't expect global rates to rise by more than 100bps over the cyclical horizon. This contributes to our moderately bullish view on equities, as do solid economic fundamentals, fiscal tailwinds and US-dollar weakness. Despite this more positive view on markets over the medium term, we remain conscious of a number of risks such as geopolitics, rich valuations, and a potential spike in global rates. We are also seeing signs that China's growth could slow in response to deleveraging, higher interest rates, and a stronger renminbi. However, we don't expect a sharp slowdown given that China's policymakers have proven competent at managing the economy and the consumer is strengthening.

We continue to believe that the fund is well positioned today to participate in market strength, but also for potential weakness, by maintaining the volatility target at 5.0% from last month. Low levels of equity volatility remains a key risk we are assessing, as the chance of a spike in volatility increase over time. Global equities constituted 48.7% of the portfolio with 4.3% in alternatives (listed real estate and infrastructure). We continue to favour diversified global duration over US duration. The fund's duration increased from 4.6 years to 5.2 years as of end-October.

Overall, we are still constructive on the longer term outlook for markets, but believe it is prudent to be prepared to implement a more cautious stance should market risks increase.

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