

growth, strong developments in its oil and gas reserve, strong free cash flow, and an improvement in the pay-out ratio. The company also gave positive guidance with regard to production growth while maintaining at least a 40% payout ratio. While CNOOC has delivered a very strong return so far this year, the stock continues to trade at an unwarrantedly large discount to its international peers, despite a much healthier production outlook.

The Hong Kong based conglomerate CK Asset Holdings was the largest negative contributor to the fund's absolute return in March. While the results for 2H 2023 were in-line with expectations, the company surprisingly cut its dividend by 10%, suggesting less confidence in management outlook. While the stock continues to trade at less than half the underlying values, we have been disappointed by only minor efforts to close this discount. Thus, we will review the case once we have discussed the outlook with the company. The Chinese insurance company Ping An also had a difficult month following an earnings miss in the asset management segment. We see this driven by one-off factors and continued to see positive underlying development in the life insurance business, with positive growth combined with improved agency efficiency. Trading at less than 5 times current earnings for a company with a long runway for structural growth is far too low, and we continue to see more than 100% upside in the stock. While the company has some exposure to the Chinese property markets, we find this exposure manageable, so we used the weakness to add to our position. The Finnish IT company TietoEvry was also among the weakest performers in March despite delivering Q4 results in-line with expectations. Importantly, the company also confirmed the expected separation of its banking unit as well as progress in its review of Tech Services. The weakness in the share price has partly been driven by cautious guidance for 2024 both from both Tieto and peers, and partly by some disappointment around the separation of the banking unit, which looks set to happen in the form of a spin-off/separate listing, instead of an outright sale. While we would also prefer a direct sale, we still believe the expected separation of the banking unit and tech services would help crystallize the underlying values in the company.

We initiated a new position in the Norwegian seismic company TGS in March. Following a very difficult period, the stock price is now at a level where we get a decent return even without a recovery in the seismic spending of oil and gas companies. We expect that the synergies effect from the upcoming merger with PGS will drive a material improvement in free cash flow, and be enough to provide us with a decent return in our base-case scenario. With just minor improvements in the underlying market, we easily see a 100% upside from these levels in our more positive scenario. We also continued to add to our position in the Swedish mining company Boliden as the recent weakness has driven the valuation down to extremely attractive levels. To fund these investments, we reduced our position in the salmon farmer Bakkafrost, the US IT company Broadcom, and the Korean re-insurance company Korean Re, as the strong share price development in these holdings has reduced the fundamental upside.

Overall, we still favour attractively priced companies within the financial, industrial, and energy sectors. These are also sectors where earnings expectations and valuation will not be unduly hurt in an environment where inflation does not return to the abnormally low levels we saw in the aftermath of the pandemic. Following the last month's rise, we again see substantial downside risk in a lot of highly priced growth companies, particular in the US stock market. If the current consensus of falling inflation and interest rates proves to be right, we expect the fund to lag the overall market, but still provide a decent absolute return in 2024. However, if inflation continues to surprise on the upside, the fund should provide much better downside protection than the benchmark – similar to what we saw in 2022.

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