

WorldWatch Headlines: March

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Africa

Algeria	Inflation rises sharply on the back of tax rate and fuel duty hikes.
Angola	President Dos Santos confirms he will not stand for re-election in August.
Botswana	Real GDP growth picks up in Q3 2016, driven primarily by the mining sector recovery.
Cameroon	New deep-water port facilities are close to receiving their first commercial shipments.
Congo, D.R.	International mining companies are showing a renewed interest in the country's mining assets.
Cote d'Ivoire	The incumbent coalition secures a majority win in the relatively peaceful election.
Ethiopia	Corruption is adversely affecting the business environment and social stability.
Gabon	Legislative elections scheduled for December 2016 are postponed to July 2017.
Ghana	The cedi remains weak as the 2016 fiscal deficit is larger than expected.
Kenya	Inflows of FDI are strong and the country ranks highly in terms of greenfield projects.
Libya	Foreign exchange risks, fraud, and hard currency smuggling continue to undermine the business environment.
Malawi	The country's corruption ranking deteriorates for the fourth consecutive year.
Mauritius	The weakening of the ruling political coalition could adversely affect policy.
Morocco	The king seeks political and economic boosts from the recent African Union deal.
Mozambique	Renamo's announcement of a ceasefire brings a temporary halt to the country's armed conflict.
Namibia	The country is in technical recession after quarterly growth contracts again.
Nigeria	A successful Eurobond issuance signals continued investor interest.
Senegal	The resolution of Gambia's post-election crisis could create opportunities for Senegal.
Sierra Leone	Escalating price pressures add to business overheads and transaction costs.
South Africa	Tax hikes and budget cuts are proposed to reassure international investors.
Sudan	The easing of US sanctions could free up trade and investment opportunities.
Tanzania	New investment is expected to boost electricity supply and reliability.
Tunisia	The economic situation is improving, but remains challenging.
Uganda	An upbeat IMF assessment will boost investor confidence and attract more FDI.
Zambia	Annual consumer price inflation eases considerably as the currency stabilises.
Zimbabwe	Imports fell steeply last year owing to the imposition of new regulatory restrictions.

Asia Pacific

Afghanistan	New peace talks include six countries but exclude the Taliban.
Australia	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades its rating outlook for Australia due to an improvement in the economic outlook.
Bangladesh	Taxes are cut to zero for the IT sector to encourage business investment.
Cambodia	New political legislation marks a significant retreat from democracy.

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China	The government lowers growth target and aims to rein in upstream industry and financial system risks.
Fiji	Private consumption and investment will support economic growth of 3.3% this year.
Hong Kong	Improvements in trade and retail sales figures continue in December 2016.
India	Aggressive monetary-fiscal stimulus is unlikely, while the post-demonetisation recovery is in its early stages.
Indonesia	A damaging dispute in the mining sector disrupts copper output.
Japan	Exports drive GDP growth, boosted by the weak yen.
Korea (South)	Modest economic growth is possible in 2017 despite a rocky political backdrop.
Malaysia	Private consumption and exports drive growth in 2016.
Myanmar	The assassination of a government adviser increases ethnic-sectarian tensions.
Nepal	A proposed constitutional amendment provokes street protests.
New Zealand	Key macroeconomic developments are likely to guide monetary policy decisions in 2017.
Pakistan	Militant attacks undermine the security gains made since 2014.
Papua New Guinea	The real GDP growth forecast shows an acceleration in 2017 and 2018.
Philippines	The central bank holds the interest rate, but an increase is expected in Q2.
Singapore	Financial regulations are eased in an effort to encourage investment flows and raise productivity rates.
Sri Lanka	The authorities are preparing for an intensification of the worst drought since the 1970s.
Taiwan	The jump in business investment seen in Q4 will help drive export growth in 2017.
Thailand	Growth should pick up modestly this year against a background of increased external risks.
Vietnam	The government launches ambitious plans to improve the business environment.

Eastern Europe

Albania	Corruption is falling as a result of government reforms, according to an international report.
Azerbaijan	Following a contraction in 2016, the economy should pick up slightly as oil prices rise.
Belarus	Rare instances of civil protest are allowed to go ahead.
Bosnia & Herzegovina	The convertible mark will fall against the dollar in 2017.
Bulgaria	A recovery in investment activity will help maintain solid economic momentum.
Croatia	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades its rating outlook for Croatia due to strong GDP growth.
Czech Republic	GDP growth slows to a three-year low in 2016, despite robust domestic demand.
Estonia	The amenable business environment continues to improve as the authorities encourage trade and investment.
Georgia	The opposition party splits over leadership issues, although political focus remains on Western integration.
Hungary	Corruption is worsening due to the capture of state institutions by the governing parties.
Kazakhstan	The president proposes constitutional reforms to devolve certain powers to the cabinet and parliament.
Kyrgyz Republic	The country's market environment outlook improves with an upturn in medium-term prospects.
Latvia	Economic growth picks up strongly in the final quarter of 2016.
Lithuania	The country's ranking for corruption worsens in the wake of recent scandals.
Macedonia	The integrity of the state is put at risk over Albanian participation in government.

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Poland	Real GDP growth slows due to weaker investment activity.
Romania	Dun & Bradstreet downgrades Romania's country risk rating as business conditions deteriorate.
Russian Federation	The economy posts a milder than expected contraction in 2016.
Serbia	The credit environment is improving, but exporters should still exercise caution.
Slovak Republic	The economic outlook for the next two years remains positive.
Slovenia	The economic growth outlook improves for both 2017 and 2018.
Tajikistan	Remittance flows fell in 2016 and are likely to remain muted this year.
Turkmenistan	Growth is forecast to accelerate to 6.9% in 2017 and 7.5% in 2018.
Ukraine	Rolling power blackouts are possible as a state of emergency is declared in the energy sector.
Uzbekistan	World Bank loans will boost road rebuilding, and air links with Tajikistan have been restored.

Middle East

Bahrain	New central bank data shows FX reserves fell sharply in the third quarter of 2016.
Egypt	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades Egypt's country risk rating as the exchange rate rallies.
Iran	The IMF commends the authorities on the improved macroeconomic position.
Iraq	Iraqi forces reach the Tigris river and capture most of Mosul's east bank.
Israel	All options are still on the table for the Trump administration concerning the Israeli/Palestinian issue.
Jordan	Dun & Bradstreet downgrades Jordan's country risk rating due to issues undermining the economic, political and commercial environments.
Kuwait	The stock market surges in January after years of stagnation.
Lebanon	The IMF commends the authorities for maintaining macroeconomic stability.
Oman	The government amends the corporate tax law to boost fiscal revenues.
Qatar	State-owned companies look for strategic opportunities abroad, strengthening the country's long-term potential.
Saudi Arabia	Business optimism rises as the government continues to pay off its outstanding invoices.
Syria	Significant financial risks remain despite the stock market rebound.
UAE	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades its rating outlook for the UAE due to the stronger oil price.
Yemen	The US increases its naval presence off the Yemeni coast as relations with Iran deteriorate.

The Americas

Argentina	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades Argentina's country risk rating as growth prospects improve.
Bolivia	A planned amendment to rules for financial services will result in a tax hike for banks.
Brazil	Congressional appointments boost the president's reform agenda.
Canada	Headline data suggests an improving short-term outlook, but the finer details reveal lurking weaknesses.
Chile	Growth forecast is hit by an ongoing strike at the world's largest copper mine.
Colombia	Delayed peace talks begin between the government and the ELN rebel group.
Costa Rica	Impressive growth masks strong concerns over the fiscal position's sustainability.
Cuba	Trump's protectionist stance could undo US-Cuba normalisation gains.

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Dominican Republic	The real GDP growth forecast is solid for both 2017 and 2018.
Ecuador	The outcome of the forthcoming presidential election becomes more uncertain.
El Salvador	Economic growth will remain modest despite the expected rise in domestic demand.
Guatemala	Weakness in construction and mining drags down economic activity.
Honduras	The reform process in law enforcement institutions faces challenges due to high-level police corruption.
Jamaica	The real GDP growth forecast increases for both 2017 and 2018.
Mexico	The president's approval rating drops further as a gas-price hike sparks protests.
Nicaragua	Costa Rica takes Nicaragua to the International Court of Justice over the two countries' border dispute.
Panama	A bribery probe threatens policy-making capacity and could increase political tensions.
Paraguay	Political uncertainty rises amid renewed manoeuvres to introduce presidential re-election.
Peru	The government introduces new anti-corruption measures in the light of a widening bribery scandal.
Trinidad & Tobago	The near-term outlook remains downbeat as external and domestic market uncertainties persist.
USA	Rising policy uncertainty keeps businesses guessing and could temporarily affect investment.
Uruguay	Trade flows fall for the second year in a row, but there are signs of recovery.
Venezuela	The president tightens his grip on political power.

Western Europe

Austria	The growth forecast for 2017 improves, with encouraging forward-looking indicators.
Belgium	The country's economic growth will be marked by volatility in the next quarters.
Cyprus	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades Cyprus's country risk rating due to an ongoing improvement in the macroeconomic environment.
Denmark	GDP growth will accelerate in 2017 and 2018.
Finland	Rising wages and soaring consumer confidence will underpin household spending in 2017 and 2018.
France	The presidential election race frontrunner is embroiled in a nepotism scandal.
Germany	Insolvency risk continues to fall sharply, impacting positively on the country's credit risk level.
Greece	The economy is likely to have expanded further in the fourth quarter of 2016.
Iceland	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades Iceland's country risk rating due to a new government and buoyant growth.
Ireland	Key indicators hint at further GDP growth in the final quarter of 2016.
Italy	Economic sentiment worsens amid growing inequalities and disparities.
Luxembourg	Economic sentiment approaches a ten-year high.
Malta	The economy expanded further in Q3, largely driven by increased household spending and net exports.
Netherlands	Political uncertainty remains high ahead of the general election.
Norway	Dun & Bradstreet upgrades its rating outlook for Norway due to a recovery from the oil price slump.
Portugal	The economy grew in Q4 and inflation is also picking up.
Spain	The economy gathers momentum in 2016 amid positive data across a range of indicators.
Sweden	The krona appreciates, but markets could be underestimating the downside risks.

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Switzerland	A referendum vote brings corporate tax reform to a halt.
Turkey	The IMF highlights the strong headwinds facing Turkey's policymakers.
United Kingdom	Shortly before Article 50 is invoked, high frequency data remains sound although slowly deteriorating.



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