

Rating Action: Moody's Ratings assigns A3 to CapitaLand Ascendas REIT's euro MTN drawdown

20 May 2024

Singapore, May 20, 2024 -- Moody's Ratings (Moody's) has assigned a senior unsecured rating of A3 to the SGD -denominated notes to be issued by CapitaLand Ascendas REIT (CLAR, A3 stable) under its existing euro medium-term note (MTN) program, which is rated (P)A3.

The outlook is stable.

CLAR will use the proceeds from the notes to refinance short-term borrowings.

RATINGS RATIONALE

CLAR's A3 rating reflects its stable operating track record and income generation from its diversified portfolio of good-quality properties across Singapore, Australia, Europe, the UK and the US. It also reflects CLAR's established market position as the largest business space and industrial asset owner in Singapore.

CLAR's portfolio occupancy rates remained high at 93.3% as of the end of March 2024, and the trust recorded double-digit rental reversions in the first three months of the year. Although rental reversions will likely moderate this year as macroeconomic conditions remain challenging, tight supply conditions in the market, particularly for logistics and industrial properties, will support positive reversions.

CLAR's credit metrics will likely remain within their respective rating thresholds over the next two years, albeit with limited buffers. Its interest coverage ratio will decrease marginally to 3.5x over the next two years from 3.6x in 2023 as the trust refinances its maturing debt at the higher prevailing borrowing costs. Meanwhile, its leverage, as measured by net debt to EBITDA, will remain at around 7.8x over the same period.

Nonetheless, CLAR has a track record of maintaining prudent financial policies, having grown its property portfolio over the years via a balanced mix of debt, equity and asset recycling.

CLAR's liquidity is inadequate because of its reliance on revolving credit facilities. As of the end of December 2023, its cash sources – namely its cash balance and committed undrawn facilities – are insufficient to cover SGD584 million of its revolving credit facilities and SGD1.38 billion of its medium-term notes and term loans maturing through December 2025. However, the trust's track record of maintaining funding access and its established banking relationships will likely mitigate this refinancing risk.

The stable outlook reflects Moody's view that CLAR will continue to demonstrate steady earnings growth. At the same time, the agency expects the trust to remain financially prudent in the execution of its growth strategy.

FACTORS THAT COULD LEAD TO AN UPGRADE OR DOWNGRADE OF THE RATING

Moody's could upgrade CLAR's ratings if the trust continues to improve its geographic diversification while strengthening its credit metrics, such that its Moody's-adjusted debt/total deposited assets falls below 35% and its Moody's-adjusted net debt/EBITDA strengthens to below 6.0x on a sustained basis.

On the other hand, Moody's could downgrade CLAR's ratings if the operating environment deteriorates, leading to higher vacancy levels and a decline in its operating cash flow or a fall in its asset valuations; or if the trust's credit metrics weaken, such that its Moody's-adjusted net debt/EBITDA rises above 8.0x-8.5x or its Moody's-adjusted EBITDA/interest coverage falls below 3.5x.

A significant change in CLAR's business risk profile resulting from expansion into higher-risk jurisdictions could also strain its rating.

The principal methodology used in this rating was REITs and Other Commercial Real Estate Firms published in February 2024 and available at https://ratings.moodys.com/rmc-documents/414558. Alternatively, please see the Rating Methodologies page on https://ratings.moodys.com for a copy of this methodology.

CapitaLand Ascendas REIT listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange in November 2002. As of the end of December 2023, the trust had a diversified portfolio of 95 properties in Singapore, 34 in Australia, 50 in Europe and 48 in the US, with a total appraised value of SGD16.9 billion.

REGULATORY DISCLOSURES

For further specification of Moody's key rating assumptions and sensitivity analysis, see the sections Methodology Assumptions and Sensitivity to Assumptions in the disclosure form. Moody's Rating Symbols and Definitions can be found on https://ratings.moodys.com/rating-definitions.

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