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International long-term credit ratings

International long-term credit ratings (LTCR) may also be referred to as long-term ratings. When assigned to most issuers, it is used as a benchmark measure of probability of default and is formally described as an Issuer Default Rating (IDR). The major exception is within Public Finance, where IDRs will not be assigned as market convention has always focused on timeliness and does not draw analytical distinctions between issuers and their underlying obligations. When applied to issues or securities, the LTCR may be higher or lower than the issuer rating (IDR) to reflect relative differences in recovery expectations.

The following rating scale applies to foreign currency and local currency ratings:

Investment Grade	Current Definition (2007)
AAA	Highest credit quality. 'AAA' ratings denote the lowest expectation of credit risk. They are assigned only in case of exceptionally strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is highly unlikely to be adversely affected by foreseeable events.
AA	Very high credit quality. 'AA' ratings denote expectations of very low credit risk. They indicate very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments. This capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.
A	High credit quality. 'A' ratings denote expectations of low credit risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to changes in circumstances or in economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.
BBB	Good credit quality. 'BBB' ratings indicate that there are currently expectations of low credit risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered adequate but adverse changes in circumstances and economic conditions are more likely to impair this capacity. This is the lowest investment grade category.

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International short-term credit ratings

The following ratings scale applies to foreign currency and local currency ratings. A short-term rating has a time horizon of less than 13 months for most obligations, or up to three years for US public finance, in line with industry standards, to reflect unique risk characteristics of bond, tax, and revenue anticipation notes that are commonly issued with terms up to three years. Short-term ratings thus place greater emphasis on the liquidity necessary to meet financial commitments in a timely manner.

Short Term Rating	Current Definition (2007)
F1	Highest credit quality. Indicates the strongest capacity for timely payment of financial commitments; may have an added "+" to denote any exceptionally strong credit feature.
F2	Good credit quality. A satisfactory capacity for timely payment of financial commitments, but the margin of safety is not as great as in the case of the higher ratings .
F3	Fair credit quality. The capacity for timely payment of financial commitments is adequate; however, near term adverse changes could result in a reduction to non investment grade.
B	Speculative. Minimal capacity for timely payment of financial commitments, plus vulnerability to near term adverse changes in financial and economic conditions.
C	High default risk. Default is a real possibility. Capacity for meeting financial commitments is solely reliant upon a sustained, favourable business and economic environment.
D	Indicates an entity or sovereign that has defaulted on all of its financial obligations.

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Individual ratings

Individual ratings are assigned only to banks. These ratings, which are internationally comparable, attempt to assess how a bank would be viewed if it were entirely independent and could not rely on external support. These ratings are designed to assess a bank's exposure to, appetite for, and management of risk, and thus represent our view on the likelihood that it would run into significant difficulties such that it would require support.

Individual Rating	Current Definition (2007)
A	A very strong bank. Characteristics may include outstanding profitability and balance sheet integrity, franchise, management, operating environment or prospects.
B	A strong bank. There are no major concerns regarding the bank. Characteristics may include strong profitability and balance sheet integrity, franchise, management, operating environment or prospects.
C	An adequate bank, which, however, possesses one or more troublesome aspects. There may be some concerns regarding its profitability and balance sheet integrity, franchise, management, operating environment or prospects.
D	A bank, which has weaknesses of internal and/or external origin. There are concerns regarding its profitability and balance sheet integrity, franchise, management, operating environment or prospects. Banks in emerging markets are necessarily faced with a greater number of potential deficiencies of external origin.
E	A bank with very serious problems, which either requires or is likely to require external support.
F	A bank that has either defaulted or, in Fitch's opinion, would have defaulted if it had not received external support. Examples of such support include state or local government support, (deposit) insurance funds; acquisition by some other corporate entity or an injection of new funds from its shareholders or equivalent.

Notes:

- Gradations may be used among the five ratings: i.e. A/B, B/C, C/D, and D/E.
- (s) - An Individual rating may be followed by the suffix (s), denoting that it is largely based on public information, though supplemented by data obtained from the rated entity.

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Support ratings

Support ratings offer Fitch's judgement of a potential supporter's (either a sovereign state's or an institutional owner's) propensity to support a bank and of its ability to support it. Its ability to support is set by the potential supporter's own Fitch Long-term debt rating, both in foreign currency and, where appropriate, in local currency. Support ratings have a direct link to Long-term debt ratings, but they do not, nevertheless, assess the intrinsic credit quality of a bank, rather they communicate Fitch Ratings' judgement on whether the bank would receive support should this become necessary.

Support Rating	Current Definition (2007)
1	A bank for which there is an extremely high probability of external support. The potential provider of support is very highly rated in its own right and has a very high propensity to support the bank in question. This probability of support indicates a minimum Long-term rating floor of 'A-'.
2	A bank for which there is a high probability of external support. The potential provider of support is highly rated in its own right and has a high propensity to provide support to the bank in question. This probability of support indicates a minimum Long-term rating floor of 'BBB-'.
3	A bank for which there is a moderate probability of support because of uncertainties about the ability or propensity of the potential provider of support to do so. This probability of support indicates a minimum Long-term rating floor of 'BB-'.
4	A bank for which there is a limited probability of support because of significant uncertainties about the ability or propensity of any possible provider of support to do so. This probability of support indicates a minimum Long-term rating floor of 'B'.
5	A bank for which external support, although possible, cannot be relied upon. This may be due to a lack of propensity to provide support or to very weak financial ability to do so. This probability of support indicates a Long-term rating floor no higher than 'B-' and in many cases no floor at all.

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Rating Outlook: An outlook indicates the direction a rating is likely to move over a one to two-year period. Outlooks may be positive, stable or negative. A positive or negative Rating Outlook does not imply a rating change is inevitable. Similarly, ratings for which outlooks are 'stable' could be upgraded or downgraded before an outlook moves to positive or negative if circumstances warrant such an action. Occasionally, Fitch ratings may be unable to identify the fundamental trend. In these cases, the Rating Outlook may be described as evolving.

Program ratings: (such as the those assigned to MTN shelf registrations) relate only to standard issues made under the program concerned; it should not be assumed that these ratings apply to every issue made under the program. In particular, in the case of non-standard issues, i.e. those that are linked to the credit of a third party or linked to the performance of an index, ratings of these issues may deviate from the applicable program rating.

Variable rate: Demand obligations and other securities which contain a short-term 'put' or other similar demand feature will have a dual rating, such as AAA/F1+. The first rating reflects the ability to meet long-term principal and interest payments, whereas the second rating reflects the ability to honour the demand feature in full and on time.

Interest only: Ratings are assigned to interest strips. These ratings do not address the possibility that a security holder might fail to recover some or all of its initial investment due to voluntary or involuntary principal repayments.

Principal only: Ratings address the likelihood that a security holder will receive their initial principal investment either before or by the scheduled maturity date.

Rate of return: Ratings also may be assigned to gauge the likelihood of an investor receiving a certain predetermined internal rate of return without regard to the precise timing of any cash flows.

'PIF': The tranche has reached maturity and has been "paid-in-full", regardless of whether it was amortized or called early. As the issue no longer exists, it is therefore no longer rated.

'NR': Denotes that Fitch Ratings does not publicly rate the associated issue or issuer.

'Withdrawn/WD': Indicates that the rating has been withdrawn and is no longer maintained by Fitch.

Fitch emphasises that these ratings constitute their opinions alone - although they may discuss the principles underlying them with the supervisory authorities, the ratings given to banks are Fitch's own and are not submitted to the authorities for their comment or endorsement.