MOODY'S

Rating Action: **Moody's assigns Aa2 to NYC GO Fiscal 2023 Series F & G and Fiscal 2023 Series 1; outlook stable**

17 May 2023

New York, May 17, 2023 -- Moody's Investors Service has assigned Aa2 ratings to the City of New York's $1.1 billion General Obligation Bonds, Fiscal 2023 Series F, Subseries F-1 (Tax-Exempt); $153.6 million General Obligation Bonds, Fiscal 2023 Series F, Subseries F-2 (Taxable); $50 million General Obligation Bonds, Fiscal 2023 Series G (Tax-Exempt); and $265.5 million General Obligation Bonds, Fiscal 2023 Series 1 (Tax-Exempt). The bonds are scheduled to price May 30 and May 31. Moody's also maintains Aa2 ratings on approximately $39 billion of outstanding general obligation debt. The outlook is stable.

RATINGS RATIONALE

The Aa2 general obligation rating, the same as New York City's issuer rating, reflects the city's competitive advantages which include a young and highly skilled labor pool, access to higher education and medical centers, normally strong domestic and international transportation links and low crime rates relative to other large cities. The rating also reflects the city's strong institutional budgetary and financial management and the breadth and diversity of its revenue base. New York City's financing responsibilities are broader than most local governments, since it is a city, five counties and the nation's largest school district and its debt burden is above-average because of this operational scope. Despite those responsibilities, the city's fixed costs for debt service, pensions and retiree healthcare are below the median for the largest local governments and in the bottom five among the nation's largest cities.

RATING OUTLOOK

The stable outlook reflects improvement in the city's overall financial position, including the substantial budget flexibility provided by strong tax revenue collections, growing budget reserves and federal pandemic aid. It also reflects the risk that the State of New York (Aa1 stable) will push some costs down to the city over the next several years. Job growth continues but employment is still slightly below the pre-pandemic peak and trails the nation. The longer-term credit impact of hybrid work remains uncertain, especially regarding the values of office properties. A strong institutional framework, including multiyear phase-ins of changes in commercial property assessed values and very strong budgeting, provide the city ample time to adjust if necessary. Future year budget gaps persist and are manageable but will need to be balanced amid forecasted slower tax revenue growth, persistent inflation, demand for higher public employee wages as contracts are renegotiated, and the need to keep pace with large pension and retiree healthcare liabilities.

FACTORS THAT COULD LEAD TO AN UPGRADE OF THE RATINGS

- Continued recovery of city economy to near pre-pandemic levels, combined with structurally-balanced budgets

- Stronger reserves, at levels similar to higher-rated peers

- Reduction of debt burden or further reduction in fixed costs

FACTORS THAT COULD LEAD TO A DOWNGRADE OF THE RATINGS

- Divergence from well-established fiscal practices and strong budgetary management

- Emergence of significant liquidity strain, especially that results in the need for large cash-flow borrowing

- Economic events such as sustained declines in equity prices, or trends that create significant structural budget imbalances

LEGAL SECURITY

The general obligation bonds are full faith and credit obligations of the city, secured by a real property tax levied without limitation as to rate or amount. All of the city's property tax is deposited into the general debt service fund, which is administered and maintained by the state comptroller.

State law requires that the real property be segregated into a general debt service fund held by the state comptroller. The state also statutorily covenants not to impair the rights of city bondholders to be paid when due. In our opinion, those features do not create a statutory lien on the property tax in favor of general obligation bondholders, but are strengths in the payment mechanism that are not found in most local government general obligation bonds.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Proceeds of the Fiscal 2023 Series F and G bonds will be used to refund outstanding general obligation bonds for debt service savings. Proceeds of the Fiscal 2023 Series 1 bonds will be used to remarket outstanding taxable general obligation bonds as tax-exempt bonds, also for debt service savings.

PROFILE

New York City, the largest city in the United States, is large and diverse, with an estimated population of 8.3 million as of July 2022. The size and scope of the city's operations are broader than most local governments: in addition to the city government, New York City is five counties and the nation's largest public school system, with approximately 1 million students. New York City's GDP is larger than all but four states.

METHODOLOGY

The principal methodology used in these ratings was US Cities and Counties Methodology published in November 2022 and available at https://ratings.moodys.com/rmc-documents/386953. Alternatively, please see the Rating Methodologies page on https://ratings.moodys.com for a copy of this methodology.

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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The ratings have been disclosed to the rated entity or its designated agent(s) and issued with no amendment resulting from that disclosure.

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