

GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP INC

Form 424B2

December 11, 2018

The information in this preliminary pricing supplement is not complete and may be changed. This preliminary pricing supplement is not an offer to sell nor does it seek an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

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Registration Statement No. 333-219206

Subject to Completion. Dated December 11, 2018.

GS Finance Corp.

\$

Buffered Basket-Linked Notes due

guaranteed by

The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.

The notes will not bear interest. The amount that you will be paid on your notes on the stated maturity date (expected to be December 16, 2021) is based on the performance of a weighted basket comprised of the S&P 500[®] Index (25% weighting), the EURO STOXX 50[®] Index (22.5% weighting), the iShares[®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (22.5% weighting), the S&P MidCap 400[®] Index (15% weighting) and the Russell 2000[®] Index (15% weighting) as measured from the trade date (expected to be December 11, 2018) to and including the determination date (expected to be December 13, 2021).

The return on your notes is linked in part to the performance of the iShares[®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (ETF), and not to that of the MSCI Emerging Markets Index (underlying index) on which the ETF is based. The ETF follows a strategy of "representative sampling," which means the ETF's holdings are not the same as those of the underlying index. The performance of the ETF may significantly diverge from that of its underlying index.

The initial basket level is 100 and the final basket level will equal the sum of the products, as calculated for each basket underlier, of: (i) the final underlier level divided by the initial underlier level (set on the trade date) multiplied

by (ii) the applicable initial weighted value for each basket underlier. If the final basket level on the determination date is greater than the initial basket level, the return on your notes will be positive and will equal the basket return, subject to the maximum settlement amount of \$1,400. If the final basket level declines by up to 30% from the initial basket level, you will receive the face amount of your notes. If the final basket level declines by more than 30% from the initial basket level, the return on your notes will be negative and will equal the basket return plus 30%. You could lose a significant portion of the face amount of your notes.

To determine your payment at maturity, we will calculate the basket return, which is the percentage increase or decrease in the final basket level from the initial basket level. At maturity, for each \$1,000 face amount of your notes, you will receive an amount in cash equal to:

if the basket return is positive (the final basket level is greater than the initial basket level), the sum of (i) \$1,000 plus (ii) the product of (a) \$1,000 times (b) the basket return, subject to the maximum settlement amount;
if the basket return is zero or negative but not below -30% (the final basket level is equal to or less than the initial basket level but not by more than 30%), \$1,000; or
if the basket return is negative and is below -30% (the final basket level is less than the initial basket level by more than 30%), the sum of (i) \$1,000 plus (ii) the product of (a) the sum of the basket return plus 30% times (b) \$1,000. You will receive less than the face amount of your notes.

Declines in one basket underlier may offset increases in the other basket underliers. Due to the unequal weighting of each basket underlier, the performances of the S&P 500[®] Index, the EURO STOXX 50[®] Index and the iShares[®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF will have a significantly larger impact on your return on the notes than the performances of the S&P MidCap 400[®] Index or the Russell 2000[®] Index.

You should read the disclosure herein to better understand the terms and risks of your investment, including the credit risk of GS Finance Corp. and The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. See page PS-14.

The estimated value of your notes at the time the terms of your notes are set on the trade date is expected to be between \$925 and \$965 per \$1,000 face amount. For a discussion of the estimated value and the price at which Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC would initially buy or sell your notes, if it makes a market in the notes, see the following page.

Original issue date: expected to be December 14, 2018 Original issue price: 100% of the face amount
Underwriting discount: % of the face amount Net proceeds to the issuer: % of the face amount

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any other regulatory body has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense. The notes are not bank deposits and are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental agency, nor are they obligations of, or guaranteed by, a bank.

Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC

Pricing Supplement No. dated , 2018.

The issue price, underwriting discount and net proceeds listed above relate to the notes we sell initially. We may decide to sell additional notes after the date of this pricing supplement, at issue prices and with underwriting discounts and net proceeds that differ from the amounts set forth above. The return (whether positive or negative) on your investment in notes will depend in part on the issue price you pay for such notes.

GS Finance Corp. may use this prospectus in the initial sale of the notes. In addition, Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC or any other affiliate of GS Finance Corp. may use this prospectus in a market-making transaction in a note after its initial sale. Unless GS Finance Corp. or its agent informs the purchaser otherwise in the confirmation of sale, this prospectus is being used in a market-making transaction.

Estimated Value of Your Notes

The estimated value of your notes at the time the terms of your notes are set on the trade date (as determined by reference to pricing models used by Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC (GS&Co.) and taking into account our credit spreads) is expected to be between \$925 and \$965 per \$1,000 face amount, which is less than the original issue price. The value of your notes at any time will reflect many factors and cannot be predicted; however, the price (not including GS&Co.'s customary bid and ask spreads) at which GS&Co. would initially buy or sell notes (if it makes a market, which it is not obligated to do) and the value that GS&Co. will initially use for account statements and otherwise is equal to approximately the estimated value of your notes at the time of pricing, plus an additional amount (initially equal to \$ per \$1,000 face amount).

Prior to , the price (not including GS&Co.'s customary bid and ask spreads) at which GS&Co. would buy or sell your notes (if it makes a market, which it is not obligated to do) will equal approximately the sum of (a) the then-current estimated value of your notes (as determined by reference to GS&Co.'s pricing models) plus (b) any remaining additional amount (the additional amount will decline to zero on a straight-line basis from the time of pricing through). On and after , the price (not including GS&Co.'s customary bid and ask spreads) at which GS&Co. would buy or sell your notes (if it makes a market) will equal approximately the then-current estimated value of your notes determined by reference to such pricing models.

About Your Prospectus

The notes are part of the Medium-Term Notes, Series E program of GS Finance Corp. and are fully and unconditionally guaranteed by The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. This prospectus includes this pricing supplement and the accompanying documents listed below. This pricing supplement constitutes a supplement to the documents listed below and should be read in conjunction with such documents:

Product supplement no. 1,738 dated July 10, 2017

General terms supplement no. 1,734 dated July 10, 2017

Prospectus supplement dated July 10,

2017

Prospectus dated July 10, 2017

The information in this pricing supplement supersedes any conflicting information in the documents listed above. In addition, some of the terms or features described in the listed documents may not apply to your notes.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

We refer to the notes we are offering by this pricing supplement as the “offered notes” or the “notes”. Each of the offered notes has the terms described below. Please note that in this pricing supplement, references to “GS Finance Corp.”, “we”, “our” and “us” mean only GS Finance Corp. and do not include its subsidiaries or affiliates, references to “The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.”, our parent company, mean only The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. and do not include its subsidiaries or affiliates and references to “Goldman Sachs” mean The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. together with its consolidated subsidiaries and affiliates, including us. Also, references to the “accompanying prospectus” mean the accompanying prospectus, dated July 10, 2017, references to the “accompanying prospectus supplement” mean the accompanying prospectus supplement, dated July 10, 2017, for Medium-Term Notes, Series E, references to the “accompanying general terms supplement no. 1,734” mean the accompanying general terms supplement no. 1,734, dated July 10, 2017, and references to the “accompanying product supplement no. 1,738” mean the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738, dated July 10, 2017, in each case of GS Finance Corp. and The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. The notes will be issued under the senior debt indenture, dated as of October 10, 2008, as supplemented by the First Supplemental Indenture, dated as of February 20, 2015, each among us, as issuer, The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., as guarantor, and The Bank of New York Mellon, as trustee. This indenture, as so supplemented and as further supplemented thereafter, is referred to as the “GSFC 2008 indenture” in the accompanying prospectus supplement.

This section is meant as a summary and should be read in conjunction with the section entitled “General Terms of the Underlier-Linked Notes” on page S-35 of the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738 and “Supplemental Terms of the Notes” on page S-16 of the accompanying general terms supplement no. 1,734. Please note that certain features, as noted below, described in the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738 and general terms supplement no. 1,734 are not applicable to the notes. This pricing supplement supersedes any conflicting provisions of the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738 or the accompanying general terms supplement no. 1,734.

Key Terms

Issuer: GS Finance Corp.

Guarantor: The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.

Basket underliers: the S&P 500[®] Index (Bloomberg symbol, “SPX Index”), as published by S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC; the EURO STOXX 50[®] Index (Bloomberg symbol, “SX5E Index”), as sponsored and maintained by STOXX Limited; the iShares[®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (Bloomberg symbol, “EEM UP Equity”); the S&P MidCap 400 Index (Bloomberg symbol, “MID Index”), as published by S&P Dow Jones Indices LLC, and the Russell 2000[®] Index (Bloomberg symbol, “RTY Index”), as published by FTSE Russell; see “The Basket and the Basket Underliers” on page PS-23

Basket indices: the S&P 500[®] Index, the EURO STOXX 50[®] Index, the S&P MidCap 400[®] Index and the Russell 2000[®] Index

Basket fund: the iShares[®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF

Underlying index of the basket fund: the MSCI Emerging Markets Index

Specified currency: U.S. dollars (“\$”)

Terms to be specified in accordance with the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738:

type of notes: notes linked to basket of underliers

exchange rates: not applicable

buffer level: yes, as described below

cap level: yes, as described below

averaging dates: not applicable

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interest: not applicable

redemption right or price dependent redemption right: not applicable

Face amount: each note will have a face amount of \$1,000; \$ _____ in the aggregate for all the offered notes; the aggregate face amount of the offered notes may be increased if the issuer, at its sole option, decides to sell an additional amount of the offered notes on a date subsequent to the date of this pricing supplement

Purchase at amount other than face amount: the amount we will pay you at the stated maturity date for your notes will not be adjusted based on the issue price you pay for your notes, so if you acquire notes at a premium (or discount) to face amount and hold them to the stated maturity date, it could affect your investment in a number of ways. The return on your investment in such notes will be lower (or higher) than it would have been had you purchased the notes at face amount. Also, the stated buffer level would not offer the same measure of protection to your investment as would be the case if you had purchased the notes at face amount. Additionally, the cap level would be triggered at a lower (or higher) percentage return than indicated below, relative to your initial investment. See “Additional Risk Factors Specific to Your Notes — If You Purchase Your Notes at a Premium to Face Amount, the Return on Your Investment Will Be Lower Than the Return on Notes Purchased at Face Amount and the Impact of Certain Key Terms of the Notes Will Be Negatively Affected” on page PS-17 of this pricing supplement

Supplemental discussion of federal income tax consequences: you will be obligated pursuant to the terms of the notes — in the absence of a change in law, an administrative determination or a judicial ruling to the contrary — to characterize each note for all tax purposes as a pre-paid derivative contract in respect of the basket underliers, as described under “Supplemental Discussion of Federal Income Tax Consequences” on page S-41 of the accompanying product supplement no. 1,738. Pursuant to this approach, it is the opinion of Sidley Austin LLP that upon the sale, exchange or maturity of your notes, it would be reasonable for you to recognize capital gain or loss equal to the difference, if any, between the amount of cash you receive at such time and your tax basis in your notes. Pursuant to Treasury regulations, Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) withholding (as described in “United States Taxation—Taxation of Debt Securities—Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) Withholding” in the accompanying prospectus) will generally apply to obligations that are issued on or after July 1, 2014; therefore, the notes will generally be subject to FATCA withholding. However, according to published guidance, the withholding tax described above will not apply to payments of gross proceeds from the sale, exchange or other disposition of the notes made before January 1, 2019.

Cash settlement amount: for each \$1,000 face amount of your notes, we will pay you on the stated maturity date an amount in cash equal to:

if the final basket level is greater than or equal to the cap level, the maximum settlement amount;
if the final basket level is greater than the initial basket level but less than the cap level, the sum of (1) \$1,000 plus (2) the product of (i) \$1,000 times (ii) the upside participation rate times (iii) the basket return;
if the final basket level is equal to or less than the initial basket level but greater than or equal to the buffer level, \$1,000; or
if the final basket level is less than the buffer level, the sum of (1) \$1,000 plus (2) the product of (i) \$1,000 times (ii) the buffer rate times (iii) the sum of the basket return plus the buffer amount

Initial basket level: 100

Initial weighted value: the initial weighted value for each of the basket underliers is expected to equal the product of the initial weight of such basket underlier times the initial basket level. The initial weight of each basket underlier is shown in the table below:

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Basket Underlier	Initial Weight in Basket
S&P 500 [®] Index	25%
EURO STOXX 50 [®] Index	22.5%
iShares [®] MSCI Emerging Markets ETF	