

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rules of the global economy are in flux. Details of newly introduced policy measures are slowly coming into focus, and growth prospects are shifting along with them. After the United States introduced higher tariffs starting in February, subsequent deals and resets have tempered some extremes. But uncertainty about the stability and trajectory of the global economy remains acute. Meanwhile, substantial cuts to international development aid and new restrictions on immigration have been rolled out in some advanced economies. Several major economies have adopted a more stimulative fiscal stance, raising concerns about the sustainability of public finances and possible cross-border spillovers. The world's economies, institutions, and markets have been adjusting to a landscape marked by greater protectionism and fragmentation, with dim medium-term growth prospects and calling for a recalibration of macroeconomic policies.

At the onset of trade policy shifts and the surge in uncertainty, the April 2025 *World Economic Outlook* (WEO) revised the 2025 global growth projection downward by 0.5 percentage point to 2.8 percent. This was predicated on tariffs being supply shocks for tariff-imposing countries and demand shocks for the targeted, with uncertainty being a negative demand shock all around. By July, announcements that lowered tariffs from their April highs prompted a modest upward revision to 3.0 percent. Inflation projections, while little changed overall, went up for the United States and down for many other economies.

After a resilient start, the global economy is showing signs of a moderate slowdown, as predicted. Incoming data in the first half of 2025 showed robust activity. Inflation in Asian economies was subdued, while it remained steady in the United States. This apparent resilience, however, seems to be largely attributable to temporary factors—such as front-loading of trade and investment and inventory management strategies—rather than to fundamental strength. As these factors fade, weaker data are surfacing. The front-loading is unwinding, and labor markets are softening. Pass-through of tariffs to US consumer prices, previously muted, appears increasingly likely. Advanced

economies, traditionally reliant on immigration, are seeing sharp declines in net labor inflows, with implications for potential output.

Global growth is projected to slow from 3.3 percent in 2024 to 3.2 percent in 2025 and to 3.1 percent in 2026. This is an improvement relative to the July WEO *Update*—but cumulatively 0.2 percentage point below forecasts made before the policy shifts in the October 2024 WEO, with the slowdown reflecting headwinds from uncertainty and protectionism, even though the tariff shock is smaller than originally announced. On an end-of-year basis, global growth is projected to slow down from 3.6 percent in 2024 to 2.6 percent in 2025. Advanced economies are forecast to grow about 1½ percent in 2025–26, with the United States slowing to 2.0 percent. Emerging market and developing economies are projected to moderate to just above 4.0 percent. Inflation is expected to decline to 4.2 percent globally in 2025 and to 3.7 percent in 2026, with notable variation: above-target inflation in the United States—with risks tilted to the upside—and subdued inflation in much of the rest of the world. World trade volume is forecast to grow at an average rate of 2.9 percent in 2025–26—boosted by front-loading in 2025 yet still much slower than the 3.5 percent growth rate in 2024—with persistent trade fragmentation limiting gains.

Risks to the outlook remain tilted to the downside, as they were in previous WEO reports. Prolonged policy uncertainty could dampen consumption and investment. Further escalation of protectionist measures, including nontariff barriers, could suppress investment, disrupt supply chains, and stifle productivity growth. Larger-than-expected shocks to labor supply, notably from restrictive immigration policies, could reduce growth, especially in economies facing aging populations and skill shortages. Fiscal vulnerabilities and financial market fragilities may interact with rising borrowing costs and increased rollover risks for sovereigns. An abrupt repricing of tech stocks could be triggered by disappointing results on earnings and productivity gains related to artificial intelligence (AI), marking an end to the AI investment boom and

the associated exuberance of financial markets, with the possibility of broader implications for macrofinancial stability. Pressure on the independence of key economic institutions, such as central banks, could erode hard-earned policy credibility and undermine sound economic decision making, including as a result of reduced data reliability. Commodity price spikes—stemming from climate shocks or geopolitical tensions—pose additional risks, especially for low-income, commodity-importing countries. On the upside, a breakthrough in trade negotiations could lower tariffs and reduce uncertainty. Renewed reform momentum in an effort to navigate the intensifying challenges could give a boost to medium-term growth. Faster productivity growth because of AI could bring economy-wide gains.

The task ahead is to restore confidence through credible, predictable, and sustainable policy actions. Policymakers should establish clear, transparent, and rules-based trade policy road maps to reduce uncertainty and support investment and to reap the productivity and growth benefits that more trade brings. Trade rules should be modernized for the digital age and offer opportunities for stronger multilateral cooperation. Pairing trade diplomacy with macroeconomic adjustment is crucial for correcting persistent external imbalances by addressing their underlying causes and securing lasting gains. Rebuilding fiscal buffers and safeguarding debt sustainability remain a priority.

Medium-term fiscal consolidation should involve realistic, balanced plans that combine spending rationalization and revenue generation. Any new support measures should be temporary, well-targeted, and offset by clear savings. Monetary policy should be calibrated to balance price stability and growth risks, in line with central banks' mandates. Preserving the independence of central banks remains critical for anchoring inflation expectations and enabling them to achieve their mandates. As Chapter 2 shows, past actions to improve policy frameworks have served emerging market and developing economies well in increasing resilience to risk-off shocks. Countries should embrace reform without any further delay to enhance resilience as a new global economic landscape takes shape. Efforts on structural reforms—promoting labor mobility, encouraging workforce participation, investing in digitalization, and strengthening institutions—should be redoubled now to lift growth prospects. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, industrial policy may have a role in improving resilience and growth, but full consideration should be given to opportunity costs and trade-offs involved in its use. For low-income countries, mobilizing domestic resources, including through governance and administrative reforms, is essential as external aid declines. In times of uncertainty, scenario planning and predesigned policy playbooks can improve preparedness and credibility, ensuring that policy responses are both effective and timely.