

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global growth is expected to remain stable yet underwhelming. At 3.2 percent in 2024 and 2025, the growth projection is virtually unchanged from those in both the July 2024 *World Economic Outlook Update* and the April 2024 *World Economic Outlook*. However, notable revisions have taken place beneath the surface, with upgrades to the forecast for the United States offsetting downgrades to those for other advanced economies—in particular, the largest European countries. Likewise, in emerging market and developing economies, disruptions to production and shipping of commodities—especially oil—conflicts, civil unrest, and extreme weather events have led to downward revisions to the outlook for the Middle East and Central Asia and that for sub-Saharan Africa. These have been compensated for by upgrades to the forecast for emerging Asia, where surging demand for semiconductors and electronics, driven by significant investments in artificial intelligence, has bolstered growth. The latest forecast for global growth five years from now—at 3.1 percent—remains mediocre compared with the prepandemic average. Persistent structural headwinds—such as population aging and weak productivity—are holding back potential growth in many economies.

Cyclical imbalances have eased since the beginning of the year, leading to a better alignment of economic activity with potential output in major economies. This adjustment is bringing inflation rates across countries closer together and on balance has contributed to lower global inflation. Global headline inflation is expected to fall from an annual average of 6.7 percent in 2023 to 5.8 percent in 2024 and 4.3 percent in 2025, with advanced economies returning to their inflation targets sooner than emerging market and developing economies. As global disinflation continues to progress, broadly in line with the baseline, bumps on the road to price stability are still possible. Goods prices have stabilized, but services price inflation remains elevated in many regions, pointing to the importance of understanding sectoral dynamics and of calibrating monetary policy accordingly, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Risks to the global outlook are tilted to the downside amid elevated policy uncertainty. Sudden eruptions in financial market volatility—as experienced in early August—could tighten financial conditions and weigh on investment and growth, especially in developing economies in which large near-term external financing needs may trigger capital outflows and debt distress. Further disruptions to the disinflation process, potentially triggered by new spikes in commodity prices amid persistent geopolitical tensions, could prevent central banks from easing monetary policy, which would pose significant challenges to fiscal policy and financial stability. Deeper- or longer-than-expected contraction in China’s property sector, especially if it leads to financial instability, could weaken consumer sentiment and generate negative global spillovers given China’s large footprint in global trade. An intensification of protectionist policies would exacerbate trade tensions, reduce market efficiency, and further disrupt supply chains. Rising social tensions could prompt social unrest, hurting consumer and investor confidence and potentially delaying the passage and implementation of necessary structural reforms.

As cyclical imbalances in the global economy wane, near-term policy priorities should be carefully calibrated to ensure a smooth landing. In many countries, shifting gears on fiscal policy is urgently needed to ensure that public debt is on a sustainable path and to rebuild fiscal buffers; the pace of adjustment should be tailored to country-specific circumstances. Structural reforms are necessary to lift medium-term growth prospects, but support for the most vulnerable should be maintained. Chapter 3 discusses strategies to enhance the social acceptability of these reforms—a crucial prerequisite for successful implementation. Multilateral cooperation is needed more than ever to accelerate the green transition and to support debt-restructuring efforts. Mitigating the risks of geoeconomic fragmentation and strengthening rules-based multilateral frameworks are essential to ensure that all economies can reap the benefits of future growth.