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## New Zealand

*Activity is expected to slow in 2003 after four years of healthy growth. Continued strength in domestic demand will not suffice to offset the damping effects of weaker terms of trade and a sharply higher currency. However, the slowdown is likely to be short-lived, with growth returning to its medium-term potential rate of 3 per cent in 2004.*

*The currency appreciation has taken the pressure off monetary policy, as it should drive inflation down to the middle of the 1 to 3 per cent target range. Hence, interest rates can be left unchanged for the time being. The budget remains in surplus, and the government is prudently not raising expenditure in response to higher-than-expected revenues until it is confident that the fiscal surprise will prove permanent.*

Activity was buoyant last year, with GDP growing by 4½ per cent. The export sector was robust in the first half of last year, but weakened considerably thereafter. However, domestic demand picked up to ensure a vigorous finish to the year. The labour market is very tight, with unemployment below 5 per cent and participation rates close to historical peaks. Consequently, inflation has picked up, with most measures of core inflation near 3 per cent.

The main drivers of growth last year were the lagged impact of high terms of trade and a weak currency, both of which lifted farm incomes, with flow-through effects to the rest of the economy. A high rate of immigration also contributed to a residential construction boom. These forces have begun to wane. The terms of trade have fallen by around 10 per cent from their peak, and the (trade-weighted) exchange rate has increased by 30 per cent from a deeply depressed level. Immigration, which has slowed only slightly, is likely to have a much smaller impact on residential construction growth over the next year, as the building industry is running at full capacity. Instead, demand pressures will drive up house prices.

Persistent strength in domestic demand is likely to carry the economy forward for the first six to nine months of this year. Rising employment, a pick-up in wage growth, and the wealth effect of higher house prices are all expected to contribute to solid consumer spending, at least in the cities. Spending in rural areas, however, will probably weaken. Export growth is projected to remain weak for most of 2003, due to sluggish global demand and the currency appreciation. The stronger New Zealand

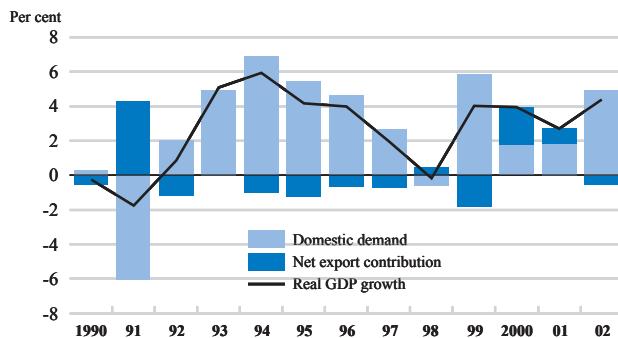
**Economic activity has been strong...**

**... but some of the driving forces have eased**

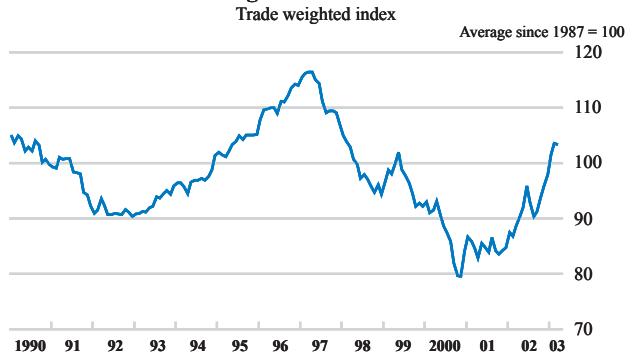
**Domestic demand momentum should partly offset weaker exports**

## New Zealand

### Domestic demand has been driving growth



### The exchange rate has bounced back



Source: Reserve Bank of New Zealand and OECD.

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New Zealand: Demand, output and prices

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	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Current prices billion NZD			Percentage changes, volume			
Private consumption	65.1	2.0	2.2	3.8	3.4	2.6
Government consumption	20.1	-1.9	3.5	4.6	2.9	2.5
Gross fixed capital formation	20.3	7.4	-1.7	8.0	4.9	2.7
Final domestic demand	105.4	2.3	1.6	4.8	3.6	2.6
Stockbuilding <sup>a</sup>	1.4	-0.5	0.2	0.2	-0.2	0.0
Total domestic demand	106.8	1.7	1.8	4.9	3.4	2.6
Exports of goods and services	32.2	6.8	2.0	7.6	4.6	6.4
Imports of goods and services	33.2	0.2	1.4	8.8	6.3	5.6
Net exports <sup>a</sup>	-1.0	2.1	0.2	-0.2	-0.5	0.3
GDP (expenditure) at market prices	105.8	3.9	2.0	4.6	2.9	2.9
GDP deflator	-	2.4	4.8	0.3	1.1	2.5
<i>Memorandum items</i>						
GDP (production)	-	4.0	2.7	4.4	3.1	2.9
Consumer price index	-	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.0	2.0
Private consumption deflator	-	2.1	2.1	1.5	1.6	2.0
Unemployment rate	-	6.0	5.3	5.2	5.1	5.3
General government financial balance <sup>b</sup>	-	0.9	1.8	1.3	0.8	0.5
Current account balance <sup>b</sup>	-	-5.2	-2.8	-3.1	-4.6	-4.6

*Note:* National accounts are based on official chain-linked data. This introduces a discrepancy in the identity between real demand components and GDP. For further details see *OECD Economic Outlook Sources and Methods*, (<http://www.oecd.org/eco/sources-and-methods>).

*a)* Contributions to changes in real GDP (percentage of real GDP in previous year), actual amount in the first column.

*b)* As a percentage of GDP.

Source: OECD.

---

dollar will also hurt the price-sensitive tourism industry next summer. In 2004, however, export growth should recover in step with the world economy. Business investment should pick up as well, since capacity utilisation rates have been high for some time, but this is unlikely to occur until global uncertainties – both geopolitical and economic – begin to fade.

### *Monetary and fiscal settings remain prudent*

The appreciating exchange rate has taken much of the pressure off monetary policy. While domestically-generated inflation (the prices of non-tradables) was around 4 per cent last year and is rising, it is being offset by decelerating import prices, resulting in consumer price inflation being driven below 2 per cent this year. But it is likely to edge up again when the impact of the currency appreciation subsides. Consequently, official interest rates, which are currently around “neutral” levels, do not need to change for the time being. On the fiscal side, the government’s accounts remain in healthy surplus, and tax revenues are substantially higher than forecast, even after adjusting for the unexpectedly buoyant economy. The government is prudently not spending these windfall revenues until it is confident that they are here to stay.

### *There are several risks to the outlook*

Apart from uncertainty about the strength and timing of the global recovery, risks include the impact of the summer drought, the highly uncertain outlook for residential construction and the possibility that the effects of the tight labour market feed into wages and prices. The current account deficit, which is forecast to rise to its long-run average of 5 per cent of GDP, combined with the high net foreign debt position, may increase the country’s vulnerability to swings in investor sentiment.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Editorial: a progressive but unspectacular recovery .....</b>	vii
<b>I. General assessment of the macroeconomic situation .....</b>	1
Overview: a slow recovery .....	1
Nature of the cycle and geopolitical risks .....	2
Strength and general dynamics of the upturn .....	9
Risks remain mainly on the downside .....	17
Macroeconomic policy challenges .....	19
Stepping up structural reform to boost growth and resilience to shocks .....	29
Appendix: The medium-term reference scenario .....	32
<b>II. Developments in individual OECD countries .....</b>	37
United States .....	37
Japan .....	41
Germany .....	45
France .....	49
Italy .....	53
United Kingdom .....	57
Canada .....	61
Australia .....	65
Austria .....	67
Belgium .....	69
Czech Republic .....	71
Denmark .....	73
Finland .....	75
Greece .....	77
Hungary .....	79
Iceland .....	81
Ireland .....	83
Korea .....	85
Luxembourg .....	87
Mexico .....	89
Netherlands .....	91
New Zealand .....	93
Norway .....	95
Poland .....	97
Portugal .....	99
Slovak Republic .....	101
Spain .....	103
Sweden .....	105
Switzerland .....	107
Turkey .....	109
<b>III. Developments in selected non-member economies .....</b>	113
China .....	114
The Russian Federation .....	116
Brazil .....	117
<b>IV. After the telecommunications bubble .....</b>	119
Introduction .....	119
A reversal of fortunes .....	120
Policy implications .....	127
<b>V. Structural policies and growth .....</b>	135
Introduction .....	135
Diverging growth trends .....	135
Explaining the differences in labour resource utilisation .....	138
Explaining the differences in the intensity of physical and human capital formation .....	145
Explaining the differences in technological progress .....	151
<b>VI. Trends in foreign direct investment in OECD countries .....</b>	157
Introduction .....	157
Patterns of FDI .....	158
Foreign direct investment and trade .....	163
<b>VII. Foreign direct investment restrictions in OECD countries .....</b>	167
Introduction .....	167
The different types of FDI barriers .....	168

The openness of OECD countries to inward FDI <i>circa</i> 1998-2000 .....	169
The liberalisation of FDI since 1980 .....	171
<b>VIII. Policy influences on foreign direct investment .....</b>	<b>175</b>
Introduction .....	175
Policy and other determinants of foreign direct investment .....	176
Foreign direct investment effects of policy reform .....	180
<b>Special chapters in recent issues of OECD Economic Outlook .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Statistical Annex .....</b>	<b>189</b>
Country classification .....	190
Weighting scheme for aggregate measures .....	190
Irrevocable euro conversion rates .....	190
National accounts reporting systems and base-years .....	191
Annex Tables .....	193
<b>Boxes</b>	
I.1. What is left of the capital overhang? .....	8
I.2. Policy and other assumptions underlying the central projections .....	10
I.3. Economic consequences of the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome .....	19
I.4. Re-assessing cyclically-adjusted balances .....	24
I.5. Assumptions underlying the medium-term reference scenario .....	35
IV.1. The OECD-wide regulatory reform in telecommunications markets .....	121
IV.2. New telecommunications technologies .....	122
VI.1. Foreign direct investment: definition and data sources .....	157
VI.2. Trade and different types of FDI .....	163
VII.1. International investment agreements .....	167
VII.2. Indicators of FDI restrictions .....	170
VIII.1. Policies and FDI: the OECD empirical analysis .....	176
<b>Tables</b>	
I.1. Output growth .....	1
I.2. Oil and non-oil commodity prices .....	9
I.3. Very short-term output growth projections .....	12
I.4. Contributions to changes in real GDP .....	12
I.5. Euro area: summary of projections .....	13
I.6. Productivity, unemployment, output gaps and inflation .....	15
I.7. World trade and current account summary .....	16
I.8. General government financial balances .....	22
I.9. Growth momentum and resilience in the larger OECD countries .....	30
I.10. Medium-term reference scenario summary .....	32
I.11. Fiscal trends in the medium-term reference scenario .....	33
I.12. Growth in potential GDP and its components .....	34
III.1. Projections for China .....	115
III.2. Projections for the Russian Federation .....	116
III.3. Projections for Brazil .....	118
IV.1. Allocation of G3 licences in OECD countries .....	131
V.1. Average trend growth in GDP per capita over selected periods .....	136
V.2. Spending at various levels of education .....	150
VIII.1. FDI positions and flows: the hypothetical effect of removing FDI restrictions .....	182
<b>Figures</b>	
I.1. Tensions and uncertainties in the global economy, spring 2003 .....	3
I.2. Variability of output and investment growth .....	5
I.3. Private investment spending in the United States and the euro area .....	6
I.4. Profit margins and capacity utilisation rates .....	7
I.5. Real effective exchange rates .....	11
I.6. Saving and investment in the United States .....	18
I.7. Resource utilisation, inflation and interest rates .....	20

I.8.	US Federal budget prospects two years apart .....	26
I.9.	Projected US deficit and yield gap.....	27
IV.1.	Market structure of fixed networks in the OECD area .....	121
IV.2.	Share price indices of selected telecommunications operators .....	123
IV.3.	12-month rolling average default rates in the telecommunications sector <i>versus</i> all industries.....	124
IV.4.	United States: Capacity utilisation rate of the communications equipment suppliers .....	126
IV.5.	Telephone and Internet subscribers in the OECD .....	127
IV.6.	Telecom services contribution to core inflation in the euro area .....	128
IV.7.	Broadband penetration rates in OECD countries, June 2002.....	129
V.1.	Sources of growth in trend GDP per capita .....	137
V.2.	Sources of growth in trend labour resource utilisation .....	139
V.3.	Estimates of gross and net replacement rates.....	141
V.4.	Changes in long-term unemployment and structural unemployment rates.....	144
V.5.	ICT investment in selected OECD countries .....	146
V.6.	Venture capital <sup>1</sup> investment by stages.....	147
V.7.	Percentage of the population that has attained a certain level of education, 2001 .....	149
V.8.	Multi-factor productivity growth over selected periods .....	152
V.9.	Expenditure on R&D in OECD countries.....	153
VI.1.	FDI flows within the OECD area.....	158
VI.2.	Distribution of OECD stocks of FDI positions in 1998.....	159
VI.3.	FDI positions in OECD countries, 1980s and 1990s .....	160
VI.4.	Activity of foreign affiliates in selected OECD countries, 1990s.....	161
VI.5.	Percentage share of employment in foreign affiliates in selected industries OECD average, 1990s .....	162
VII.1.	FDI restrictions in OECD countries, 1998/2000: breakdown by type of restriction .....	170
VII.2.	Cross-sectoral patterns of FDI restrictions, 1998/2000 .....	171
VII.3.	FDI restrictions in OECD countries, 1980-2000 .....	172
VII.4.	Evolution of FDI restrictions in selected sectors, 1981-1998 .....	172
VIII.1.	Contributions of policies and other factors to explaining cross-country differences in bilateral outward FDI positions, 1980-2000 .....	177
VIII.2.	Foreign affiliates' activities and FDI restrictions in selected industries .....	179
VIII.3.	Product market regulation and FDI positions, 1990-1998 .....	180
VIII.4.	Policies and inward FDI positions .....	181
VIII.5.	Policies and inward FDI positions: the scope for further integration .....	183

## Conventional signs

\$	US dollar	.	Decimal point
¥	Japanese yen	I, II	Calendar half-years
£	Pound sterling	Q1, Q4	Calendar quarters
€	Euro	Billion	Thousand million
mbd	Million barrels per day	Trillion	Thousand billion
..	Data not available	s.a.a.r.	Seasonally adjusted at annual rates
0	Nil or negligible	n.s.a.	Not seasonally adjusted
-	Irrelevant		

**Summary of projections<sup>a</sup>**

	2002	2003	2004	2002		2003		2004	
				I	II	I	II	I	II
Percentage changes from previous period									
<b>Real GDP</b>									
United States	2.4	2.5	4.0	3.5	2.7	1.7	3.8	4.1	3.8
Japan	0.3	1.0	1.1	1.0	3.5	0.0	0.6	1.2	1.4
Euro area	0.9	1.0	2.4	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.4	2.6	2.9
European Union	1.0	1.2	2.4	1.2	1.4	1.0	1.5	2.6	2.8
Total OECD	1.8	1.9	3.0	2.5	2.4	1.4	2.4	3.2	3.2
<b>Real total domestic demand</b>									
United States	3.0	2.8	4.0	4.2	3.3	2.1	3.8	4.2	3.8
Japan	-0.3	0.5	0.4	-0.4	3.2	-0.6	-0.2	0.5	0.7
Euro area	0.3	1.1	2.4	0.4	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.6	2.9
European Union	0.7	1.3	2.5	0.7	1.5	1.1	1.6	2.8	3.0
Total OECD	1.9	2.0	2.9	2.4	2.8	1.4	2.4	3.1	3.1
Per cent									
<b>Inflation<sup>b</sup></b>									
United States	1.1	1.6	1.3	0.9	1.3	2.0	1.2	1.5	1.3
Japan	-1.7	-2.2	-1.8	-1.7	-2.6	-2.1	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8
Euro area	2.4	1.9	1.7	2.5	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.6
European Union	2.5	1.9	1.8	2.8	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8
OECD less Turkey	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.2
Total OECD	2.1	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.4	1.3
Per cent of labour force									
<b>Unemployment</b>									
United States	5.8	6.0	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.1	5.9	5.7
Japan	5.4	5.7	5.7	5.3	5.4	5.6	5.8	5.7	5.7
Euro area	8.2	8.8	8.7	8.1	8.3	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.6
European Union	7.6	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.7	8.0	8.1	8.0	7.9
Total OECD	6.9	7.2	7.0	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.1	6.9
Per cent of GDP									
<b>Current account balance</b>									
United States	-4.8	-5.4	-5.5	-4.6	-5.0	-5.4	-5.4	-5.5	-5.5
Japan	2.8	3.1	3.9	3.0	2.6	2.9	3.4	3.8	4.1
Euro area	1.1	1.4	1.4	0.9	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
European Union	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9
Total OECD	-1.1	-1.2	-1.2	-1.0	-1.1	-1.2	-1.1	-1.1	-1.1
Per cent									
<b>Short-term interest rate<sup>c</sup></b>									
United States	1.8	1.4	3.0	1.9	1.6	1.3	1.4	2.6	3.5
Japan	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro area	3.3	2.3	2.3	3.4	3.3	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.5
Percentage changes from previous period									
<b>World trade<sup>d</sup></b>	3.6	5.9	8.8	5.9	7.9	4.1	7.5	9.3	9.4

Note: Apart from unemployment rates and interest rates, half-yearly data are seasonally adjusted, annual rates.

a) Assumptions underlying the projections include:

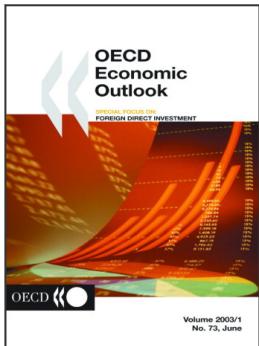
- no change in actual and announced fiscal policies;
- unchanged exchange rates as from 26 March 2003; in particular 1\$ = 120.10 yen and 0.936 euros;
- the cut-off date for other information used in the compilation of the projections is 4 April 2003.

b) GDP deflator.

c) United States: 3-month eurodollars; Japan: 3-month CDs; euro area: 3-month interbank rates. See box on policy and other assumptions underlying the projections.

d) Growth rate of the arithmetic average of world merchandise import and export volumes.

Source: OECD.



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