

# Letter from President Clinton

As we issue the sixth annual National Export Strategy report, the U.S. economy remains strong. My Administration's three-part economic strategy—cutting the budget deficit, investing in people, and opening foreign markets to our goods and services—continues to yield results. The deficit has been eliminated, and we should witness this year the first budget surplus in a generation. Unemployment is at a 28-year low at 4.5 percent. Inflation is at its lowest and consumer confidence near its highest in more than 30 years. The economy has created 16.7 million jobs since January 1993. We still have a historic boom in business investment. We remain the world's largest exporter. Standards of living continue to rise. Wages are growing at twice the rate of inflation, the strongest real wage growth in over twenty years. After decades in which incomes stagnated in our country, a growing economy means real opportunity for millions of families—the opportunity to buy a home, take a vacation, know your children will be educated, save for your retirement, and live out the American dream. The American economy is on the right track. From autos to computers, biotech to construction, our industries continue to lead the world.

Our challenge is to continue this progress in the face of increasing global economic uncertainty. We must maintain America's hard-won fiscal discipline, continue to invest in the skills of our people, and master the complex realities of the global economy.

Financial turmoil is buffeting a number of economies around the world, including Russia, Asia, and Latin America, with tremors now reaching our own stock market. While the U.S. economy remains strong, further contractions in Asia and elsewhere could have a more pronounced impact on our economy. The global economy has been a source of strength for America—with expanded trade accounting for about 30 percent of the growth we have enjoyed in the past five and a half years—and we must strive to keep it so. Asian economic weakness has dampened our exports to, and is likely to result in an expansion of our imports from, this region. It is profoundly in our national interest to work to restore the health of our trading partners. I have underscored to Russian and Asian leaders that they must take the tough steps to reform their economies and restore economic confidence. If they do so, America will work with the international community to get them back on their feet. Congress must also step up to its responsibility for growth at home and financial stability abroad by meeting our obligation to the International Monetary Fund. U.S. support for the International Monetary Fund is critical to stabilizing the international financial system and protecting American jobs and income.

As governments in Asia and elsewhere look for new ways to put their economies on firmer footing, Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee agencies will help foster economic reforms and market liberalization, and take steps to ensure U.S. companies maintain their competitiveness in the current environment. This sixth National Export Strategy report, prepared under Secretary Daley's strong leadership, sets forth a region-by-region strategy for ensuring that our export promotion programs and

activities respond to evolving opportunities and challenges. It includes, among other things, technical assistance to support economic reforms in Asia, increasing trade finance resources for U.S. exporters, high-level engagement with China, preparing U.S. exporters for introduction of a common European currency, and joining Africa in a real partnership with benefits for business and workers on both sides of the Atlantic. We will continue to assist small and medium-sized firms through new electronic means of delivering information and export financing, and continue to lead international efforts to address the problem of international bribery and corruption. We will strictly monitor compliance by our trading partners with our trade agreements and fully enforce our trade laws.

In this period of global economic instability, the United States must remain active and engaged. Our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation. We are on the right course. We must work hard to shore up the strength of the global economy and continue to sharpen our ability to compete in it so that we can continue to widen the circle of opportunity as we approach the 21st century.