Preface

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) was founded in 1920
to do empirical economic research that would provide the basis for im-
proved public and private decisions. Through the years, the Bureau has
pursued that goal through a variety of research projects and confer-
ences. The establishment of this new annual NBER macroeconomics
conference promises to be an important milestone in that tradition.

The past several decades have seen substantial advances in macro-
economic theory, econometric methods and computing technology.
Often, however, research in empirical macroeconomics has failed to live
up to the potential suggested by these advances. Major economic issues
of national importance have been debated publicly without the help of
objective economic research, while much of the academic economic re-
search has focused on relatively narrow and technical questions. Al-
though there is obviously an important role for such basic research, it is
important also for the economics profession to contribute serious re-
search to the broader public policy debate. The purpose of this new
NBER annual conference is to stimulate such empirical research on sig-
nificant national issues.

I am grateful to Stanley Fischer for organizing this annual conference
and for editing this volume. I have the highest expectations for the con-
tribution of this series over the years ahead.

Martin S. Feldstein
President
The National Bureau of Economic Research