

## WELCOMING ADDRESS



To say that we are living in a time of tumult and upheaval is a considerable understatement. The current pandemic has changed the world as we know it, and we are yet to discover what the post-COVID world will look like. Some aspects of life may return to normal, but in many cases a ‘new normal’ is likely to emerge.

One particularly remarkable phenomenon has been the universal closure of borders to trade and travel, and the speed at which this has occurred. Interestingly, such action has not been limited to national borders – we have also witnessed the closure of provincial borders within countries in an effort to protect the safety and wellbeing of citizens. While such radical means of mitigating cross-border risks will inevitably ease, the ‘new normal’ will most probably involve tighter regulatory controls than existed in the pre-pandemic world in which the facilitation of trade and travel was rapidly gaining momentum.

The shape of supply chains is also likely to change. As experts examine the lessons learned from the pandemic, early signals already suggest that greater self-sufficiency is emerging as a future priority for most economies – particularly in relation to basic living requirements, including food and medical supplies. As a result, we are likely to experience multi-country sourcing of essential commodities combined with a greater reliance on domestic supply. In addition, new export restrictions and prohibitions will undoubtedly make a resurgence, along with quota restrictions. This is already occurring in relation to certain categories of critical medical supplies such as personal protective equipment, medication and test kits.

The new normal will bring with it many challenges for both traders and regulators. Indeed, the new-look international trading environment will inevitably test the effectiveness of existing regulatory arrangements, and academics must play their part in helping to shape the future by influencing policy decision-making through the provision of rigorous scientific evidence. In this regard, the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) encourages its researchers, including contributors to this journal, to be proactive in pursuing this important and emerging field of knowledge.

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