

# TRADEBEAT

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. Bolstering Recovery, Renewal, Resilience
2. Recovery by Reinforcing Collaboration
3. Renewal by Embracing Advanced Technologies
4. Resilience by Putting People at the Centre of Change

## Bolstering Recovery, Renewal, Resilience

As we move towards recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Customs Organization (WCO) has designated the 2021 theme for International Customs Day (ICD) as *“Customs bolstering Recovery, Renewal and Resilience for a Sustainable Supply Chain”*. Celebrated annually on January 26, International Customs Day presents an opportunity for WCO Members, the WCO Secretariat and global partners of Customs to collaborate around a central theme to achieve the vision at hand. The 2021 ICD theme will be dedicated to the united efforts of Customs administrations across the globe, to emerge from the devastating effects of the Coronavirus, by strengthening institutional capacity and sustainably rebuilding the global supply chain.

The WCO acknowledges that “people” are the centre of the restorative process, and that they form the backbone of all recovery initiatives. For this reason, throughout the year 2021, the global Customs community will commit to supporting people and businesses by strengthening the global supply chain, reinforcing collaboration and harnessing technology. In fulfilling the 2021 ICD vision, the WCO will be undertaking a tripartite approach in rebuilding the global supply chain and envisions *Recovery by Reinforcing Collaboration, Renewal by Embracing Advanced Technologies and Resilience by Putting People at the Centre of Change*. WCO Members are encouraged to embrace digital transformation at the borders, pay particular attention to automation, the use of innovative technologies and adopt collaborative approaches with all stakeholders along the supply chain.

**“Despite the prevailing global circumstances, the WCO has decided to mobilize resources in response to the new reality.”**



- Kunio Mikuriya,  
Secretary General,  
World Customs Organization

## Recovery by Reinforcing Collaboration

The Coronavirus pandemic brought considerable disruptions to an already unpredictable global supply chain, leading to an economic impact of mammoth proportions. As COVID-19 stretched across the continents, the novelty of the Coronavirus created more uncertainties within the global supply chain and led to an initial shortage of human resources. It also caused the implementation of additional control measures that led to delays at the borders. In response to the pandemic, many governments took mitigation measures such as travel restrictions, lockdowns, quarantines and social distancing to minimize the impact of the pandemic. These measures inadvertently affected the supply chain, causing production and supply channels to become more erratic, and created greater instability. Additionally, the supply chain was already being negatively affected by trade wars and protectionist policies which some nations had undertaken. Examples of these include the trade dispute between the USA and China, and the protectionist policies of the United Kingdom, resulting in Brexit, which forced consumers to look inwards. The increased risk of trade wars, trends of nationalism and protectionism, issues of sustainability and human rights considerations have all contributed to the volatility of the global supply chain. Coupled with the uncertainties that the pandemic presents, recovery policies have to be contemplated and reinforced at the international level to achieve sustainability in the global supply chain. Customs, as gatekeepers, at the borders is uniquely positioned to drive supply chain recovery through collaboration. Reconstruction will not be achieved in silos, but rather through a collaboration of expertise from all border agencies and related stakeholders. Coordinated border management should be further institutionalized at the national and international levels, reinforced by the implementation of WCO tools and instruments that support such measures.



## Renewal by Embracing Advanced Technologies

Never before has the use of technology been more essential to survival than during this pandemic. Embracing technology became a way of life and should be treated as crucial to the renewal process. Things cannot return to the way they were pre COVID-19, and advancing technology as the way forward and investing in innovation should be prioritized by all nations.

For years the WCO has promoted all-digital and paperless clearance processes and the use of technology for implementing effective controls, while facilitating and accelerating the trading process. While this is nothing new, the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly amplified the need for linking technology to creating a more efficient international trading process. Benefits that can be derived from the integration of technologies were always prioritized by the WCO and shared with its Members through sensitizations, specialized forums and conferences. The use of big data, telematics and the Cloud in Customs operations have been topics of ongoing training that is available to all WCO Members, and will continue to command importance in the realm of capacity building. With fresh eyes, Customs will enter the future and continue to utilize non-intrusive inspection devices, and embark on the mainstream implementation of disruptive technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, sensors and connected objects. By embracing technological advances, tangible benefits can be provided in terms of collecting, combining, sharing and analysing data which should be maximized by all officials.

As a Member of the WCO, the JCA benefits from and prioritizes the use of technological advancements to facilitate Customs operations in an efficient manner. The JCA has long seen the importance of integrating technology in its operations, and is deliberate in its drive towards incorporating the latest technologies, within its resources, to aid in the renewal process. The use of electronic platforms and online channels serve to greater secure and facilitate trade, directly benefitting the JCA's stakeholders and enhancing efficient customs operations within Jamaica.



## Resilience by Putting People at the Centre of Change

To create greater resilience “people” should be placed at the centre of the recovery model. Pandemics are considered to be systemic risks, much like natural disasters. They often appear without sufficient warning and their impact remains largely unpredictable. However, Customs administrations are being called upon to build on lessons learnt and address vulnerabilities to facilitate the way forward. People around the world have scarcely been untouched by this pandemic and have had to adjust their daily routines to adapt to this new reality.

## ILU TRADEBEAT

The International and Industry Liaison Unit is committed to raising the level of awareness on topics relating to International Trade, as well as issues concerning the Caribbean region which may affect both our internal and external stakeholders. Our quarterly newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administrations worldwide, specifically how they affect the Jamaica Customs Agency.

As we realize our vision of becoming a modern Customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as one way of contributing to the vision of the JCA. The International and Industry Liaison Unit is located at the JCA’s Head Office, and our officers are available to respond to your trade-related queries.

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Similarly, Customs as an organization has to adapt to this changing environment and rethink its general operations to become more resilient by enhancing preparedness, and raising awareness through capacity building by investing in the human element. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of not only how quickly the world can change but also of our ability to adapt, remain resilient and recover in the face of adversity. Focusing on the road to recovery, the JCA has demonstrated its ability to leverage technology and remain resilient, while using innovation through people to adapt to change.

