THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Jim Jares

On August 4, 2020, I received an email from my colleague on how "new normal" has changed the way we work and interact. While we were still conducting our business as usual and driving our work forward, we were confronted with the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. It became evident that we need to utilize technology to facilitate our work. We shifted our focus to online meetings to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

The global pandemic has forced us to adapt and find new ways of working. Our team has demonstrated resilience and flexibility in the face of adversity. We have shown our ability to think creatively, adapt quickly, and pivot towards new goals.

My two big takeaways from this last year are (1) the only constant in life is (unexpected) change and (2) preparing for change and working to develop the skills and capacity to adapt to unexpected circumstances - a virtual conference with over 100 attendees from government, industry, and academia, view-ahead video presentations from 15 different research teams complemented with presentations at our annual meeting.

On August 4, 2020, we held our CINA Annual Meeting under these "new normal" circumstances - a virtual conference with over 100 attendees from government, industry, and academia.

We have demonstrated that virtual meetings can be just as effective as in-person events. The attendees were able to participate in discussions, ask questions, and engage with the presenters. The feedback was positive, with attendees expressing that the virtual format allowed them to attend from their home or office and participate more actively in discussions.

Virtual meetings also provide a platform for collaboration across multiple time zones and geographical locations. It allows us to connect with experts and stakeholders from around the world and share knowledge and ideas.

The success of our virtual meeting is a testament to the adaptability of our team and the innovative ways in which we are able to conduct our work. We have continued to execute the second COE Summit, positions research projects for transition, launched the CINA Open RFP, continued a multi-year project on cartel smuggling, and supported three research teams.

Our team has shown that we can continue to drive our work forward and meet our goals even in the face of unexpected challenges. We are committed to utilizing technology to facilitate our work and adapt to the changing landscape.

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