

# GLOBAL INTERVIEWS

## TAKEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

APRIL 2020



**UFO**  
FREIGHT



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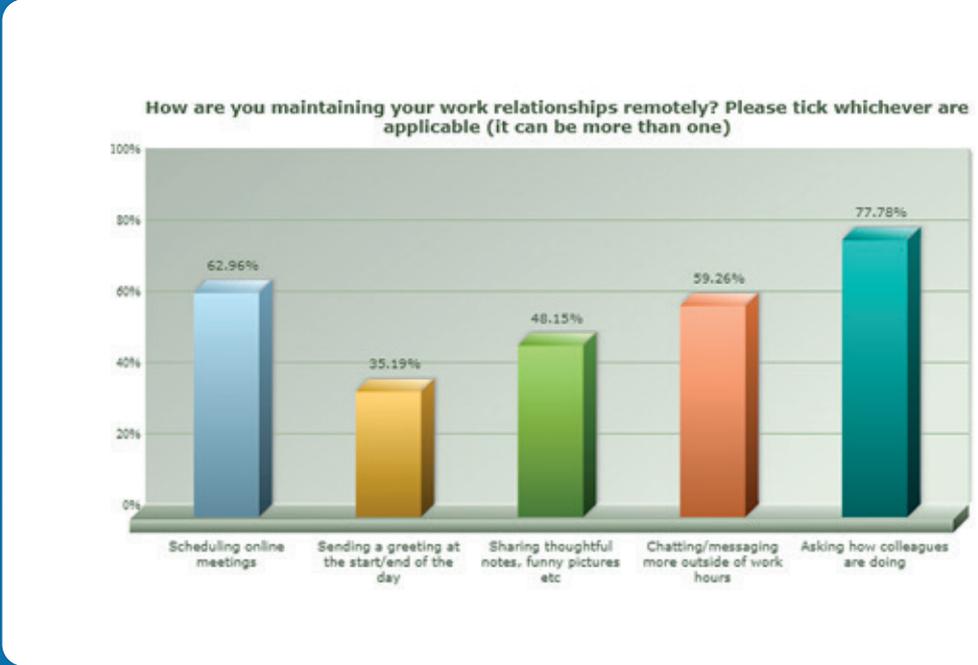
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On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the new coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic. Since then, the virus officially named COVID-19 has spread rapidly around the world reaching more than 180 countries. The pandemic has sent billions of people into lockdown and is affecting everyone both professionally and personally. As a global family, we wanted to obtain some feedback from our Members. The results are now collated in this document so that we have a permanent record to reflect upon of this historical event.



*Rachel Crawford FCILT*

**UFO President/C.E.O.**

# What are you finding most challenging at the moment business wise? How are you finding your cargo has changed?

**JAPAN:** Traffic is down but not out. We still have traffic moving and most of the goods we move are air shipments now.

**INDIA:** Unable to communicate with the shipping lines, transportation, attending the office.

**SIERRA LEONE:** Movement restriction, shortened working time, the curfew and lockdown, travel ban.

**KUWAIT:** Our sales revenue has decreased by 10-20%. Eventually need to revise the operating cost/expenses. Supply & demand going to be imbalance. Cargo system may change lot in future. Impact on trading & logistics land and air cargo totally stopped since one month and one more month to go. LCL and FCL we have booking.

**SRI LANKA:** Most challenging thing is regular client's volume / payments and new booking will be reduced badly.

**FRANCE:** Much harder to find availability, space and equipment. Need to dig in to find new suppliers. Not possible to engage on ETA and on booking as airlines selling but not having direct visibility on availabilities.

**CHILE:** We are newly based on the pandemic and are working from home and most challenging to centralize payments to shipping companies and conform to the various policies that these companies have, which are not uniformed and are not simple, to be able to meet and be able to withdraw the BL from each organization.

**MEXICO:** Our cargo volume has decreased to 70%, but we have also decreased some expenses, in Mexico we started the most difficult season, but we hope that in June our main clients are working again as normally as possible.

**COLOMBIA:** The most difficulty in our country is that all people are in quarantine and business has stopped for this reason, the customer must wait for making any decisions about new shipments. Right now, we are working at 50%.

**OMAN:** Oman has gone under lockdown very seriously and as such there is hardly any movement on the roads. A huge issue is that everybody has thrown up their hands blaming corona virus and as a result are not paying their bills and we cannot physically go to them as we normally would have done and sat in front of them till we would get our payments released due to the lockdown. The oil prices as they are and with everyone not taking May deliveries due to storage issues have also created an uncertain market and no government spending.

**BULGARIA:** The challenge is to maintain normal business activities, since the majority of office work in extraordinary conditions and routine tasks take longer than before. Despite excessive delays not much major cargo changes have been observed.

**IRELAND:** Lack of cargo uplift due to non-availability of passenger aircraft belly hold. Extra pressure on freighter operators, with resulting less capacity available. Price gouging by some airlines. We are all in this together, but the meanness of some companies to capitalize during the crisis is very surprising. Routine shipments have decreased dramatically, which is to be expected, but thankfully, we are still busy.

**BANGLADESH:** Due to Covid -19 Pandemic, entire air routing disappear that is the most challenging in forwarding industry. The airports are closed for passenger flights except some chartered flights being operated by foreign embassies to take back their nationals. Although there is no restriction on cargo flights, most are suspended due to lack of demand. Chaotogram seaport is partly operational, waiting time for taking berth of vessels has reached 15 days on average. Operation may shutdown any time due to lack of space for unloading containers due to slow delivery of import containers and almost nil exports. All those have put us in a truly unprecedented situation. We hope the situation will improve soon and the panic and restrictions applied due to the coronavirus will end.

**UAE:** Importation and export business of our traders have almost 70% to 80% reduced due to COVID market tread.

**GERMANY:** Challenge: There are 85% less loading possibilities by air freight. Cargo: only what is absolutely necessary is sent by air freight. Our sea freight runs excellent, there is hardly any difference to be seen before "Corona".

**ITALY:** The pandemic that has affected most countries in the world has led to a global change in the world of shipping. We have had a drastic drop in fashion exports, which are the main part of our business, but at the same time, we have continued, albeit to a lesser extent, to offer all the others our services to companies that have collaborated with us for several years and that are counted among those "necessary" and therefore always open and never closed by the government. My work in particular at the moment is focused on the 360 degree management of the Italian offices, liquidity, and employee management in this period of suffering both human and work.

**AUSTRALIA:** Not seeing customers face to face to grow more business cargo wise, a lot of projects on hold but I chose my customers a while ago and most of them have not been seriously affected, no retail, no bottom feeders, good reliable customers are essential for the longevity of our business.

**LITHUANIA:** We have lost most airfreight exports, due to rates for airfreight being ridiculously high and shippers can't afford paying triple rates.

**HUNGARY:** Our company has moved to home office since the pandemic has been confirmed and only in urgent cases will be do any delivery for our partners in Hungary.

**NORWAY:** Most challenging is to obtain relevant information regarding local situations such as border closures etc. Most transports take much more time to plan and carry out. Much cargo is on hold awaiting opening-up of countries affected. The oil-industry projects are slowing down.

# Have you moved any cargo that has directly resulted from the COVID-19 outbreak?

**FRANCE:** We did import face masks for supermarkets (for staff not for clients). Probably in Europe all shipment is concerned by COVID 19 and coming from overseas will need CE certificate issued by CE organization (we had first CE certificate coming from Chinese organisation refused by customs so we had to provide one coming from CE country).



**KUWAIT:** We have exported plastic materials from Kuwait to China. 40 FT Containers in March - 11 TEU and April 14 TEU we imported vehicles from China to Kuwait by RORO. We imported project cargo from South Korea approx. 40FT 150 containers and delivered during the month March & April retail containers from various clients between 1-5 of approx 30 clients but no air and by road.



**MEXICO:** Yes, we are moving masks, paracetamol (many containers) fabrics and monitors, by air and sea.



**SRI LANKA:** Yes, very few air freight and mostly via sea freight.



**GERMANY:** Yes, masks and protective clothing.



**JAPAN:** Yes. Medical equipment and masks are key commodities nowadays.



**LITHUANIA:** Yes. We moved but only small shipments as yet. We quoted few charter options, but with no luck. Working on trucking solution for disinfectant.



**NORWAY:** Medical support - test equipment.



**UAE:** Some of our sea freight shipments have not been cleared in Indian ports due to close down of operational activities in Indian ports.



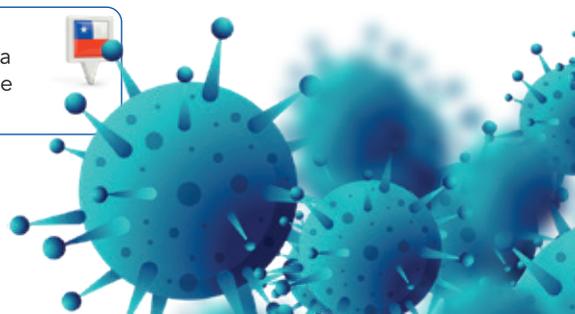
**ITALY:** Yes, mask and some medical disposal.



**IRELAND:** Yes, some shipments of PPE. We have tried to arrange some charters, but with quoted costs of up to \$2 million for a B74F from China to US, it is not that easy to convince the customers! There is little or no availability of large freighters in the marketplace, for charter.



**CHILE:** We've moved China's area cargo inputs for the pandemic directly.



# Do you think your authorities are handling the crisis? Are they giving regular advice and updates?

## BANGLADESH:

Yes, our authorities are trying their best to handle the crisis and giving us regular updates. People, companies even governments have rallied and united to face the fight.



## IRELAND:

We are very lucky here in Ireland that we have such an open and honest government, and an added bonus, our Prime Minister is a Doctor. Our Chief Medical Officer and his team are extremely well respected, and almost the entire country has 100% faith in their judgement. Our Prime Minister and Health Minister have been leading from the front, and have gained tremendous respect for their efforts, in dealing with this horrible disease. There is a daily update from the CMO and his team, every evening on TV, with full and frank details of the day's activity and reporting. They are working so hard on our behalf. They are the new superstars in Ireland.



## SRI LANKA:

Yes of course, we are satisfying all the steps which has been taken by Government authorities...it has full control in Sri Lanka.



## GERMANY:

In the short term, our authority is responding extremely well. However, in Germany and Europe we are running up debt on an incalculable scale.



## ITALY:

Yes, I do. Our government is facing the crisis correctly, the only note I can do and I feel I can do is that we probably should have acted sooner since we already had the mirror of China. The other European countries also made the same mistake, if not more serious, because they had not only China and Italy before their eyes, they should have implemented isolation policies much earlier.



## AUSTRALIA:

Yes, they are handling best they can. This is all new for everyone, so it is not a case of right or wrong, just each day changes about how we are going to handle it.



## FRANCE:

They do regular update but don't bring much solution. With all money French spend in Healthcare via taxes on Salary and companies etc... it doesn't make sense the lack of supplies we have to face such a crisis.



## CHILE:

Yes, the authorities like all of us have had to adjust to various fronts: 1.- move fast, 2.- unify work strategies, 3.- a single voice leading, 4.- adjust your computer systems to communications systems at minimum time. The authority in Chile they are updating every day, data of the crisis, the first part with lack of more plausible information.



## JAPAN:

Unfortunately, the Japanese government is not making any daring decision to lockdown. Should they enforce stronger and earlier lockdown. We could have a better today.



## MEXICO:

We believe that our government is doing well, there is a lack of supplies, but they are being received from various parts of the world. There are updates and recommendations in the morning and in the afternoon.



## SIERRA LEONE:

One will not say yes or no but they have announced and giving their advice for citizens to be safe. The human being is one species that is hard to handle.



## NORWAY:

The crisis is handled extremely well here. Press briefings every day are concise and informative.



## BULGARIA:

Yes. Twice a day briefings with reports and analyses. Essential instructions and direction to population for preventing the spread.



## HUNGARY:

It's a new situation, they are doing their best. They have interviews on every second day, do the updates, and tell the news.



## LITHUANIA:

In general – they doing fine, but there could always be better. Especially lack of PPE for medical staff at the beginning of crisis. Also, shortage of tests at the first two weeks of the quarantine was imposed. Updates are regular and comprehensive.



## COLOMBIA:

Yes, our government is permanently reporting about actions that they will be taking.



## AUSTRALIA:

Here in Australia not bad at all closing borders before most countries paid off.



## OMAN:

They are but their hands are tied, and they are doing the best they can. Updates are given regularly, and so people know what is going on and how fast it is spreading. We have informed all our staff to stay as isolated as they can and observe social distancing. Ensure to avoid any crowded places and wear a mask at all times.



Within your local community, have you been impressed/unimpressed by anything in particular i.e. organisation in shops, community spirit, abundance of restrictions, etc?

**NORWAY:** Almost everyone follows the authorities' recommendations 100%. 

**AUSTRALIA:** Charity for the homeless. Donations and clothing. 

**IRELAND:** In general, the population has rowed in behind the instructions issued by the Government. Everyone has cabin fever, but most understand the necessity to flatten the curve, and reduce the number of infections. All shops and supermarkets have reduced the numbers of people allowed in at any one time, 2mtr social distancing is practiced almost everywhere across the country. Our police are quietly and effectively enforcing the essential travel rule. There have been very few arrests for refusing to obey. We have to admire anyone working in our health service, they are in much more danger than the rest of us. They are putting their lives on the line to protect us all. Community spirit is alive and well. 

**CHILE:** Compliance with restrictions in general has been good at 80%, there is always the other percentage that you do not understand and want to understand. In Chile the computational level is good in terms of technology, but without a doubt with this pandemic will make us accelerate the processes of unification of information both at the corporate level and also at the level of government, almost like a quantum leap. 

**BANGLADESH:** Individual help for each other in crisis situation is most impressive in our community. We need to improve health facilities which is really unimpressive, and our government should invest additional budget for health sector. 

**AUSTRALIA:** Perth is not a big city and has a small town mentality (in a good way) too so it's been good in general, people are mostly following the authority's recommendations and it's working. Worth mentioning the toilet paper idiots. 

**LITHUANIA:** Impressed how many initiatives for medical personnel support (donating funds and PPE, food and etc) Also people follow the rules imposed quite okay. 

**GERMANY:** That I'm impressed anywhere, I can't say. Some restrictions like closed restaurants I can't understand. With a little organization, you could do better. Security measures are okay and apparently necessary. Everybody sticks to them, but that is also the least that can be expected in a society. 

**OMAN:** In Goa (India) where I am presently locked in there is a lot of community services. People organize games like house / Tambola where people participate from their balconies. Groceries, vegetables, fish and fruit suppliers come to the complexes and people form queues to buy stuff all organized by the management of the society. A lot of people as well formed groups to go and feed the stray animals that are left in a very poor condition due to all the restaurants being closed. Elderly are provided facilities and groceries at their doorstep. 

**ITALY:** I was impressed that there are people, albeit in the minority, who still do not realize the seriousness of the situation today, but fortunately there are few. 

**SRI LANKA:** I saw many of Sri Lankan's distribute dry rations and to people who are low earning people, not only that all churches, media channels, government, leading companies support in many way to minimize the damage to the nation due to Covid 19. 

**SIERRA LEONE:** Impressed because people are doing their best to ensure they are safe. There are veronica buckets at the entrance of all shops and offices for you to wash your hands with water and soap before entering. People are putting on face masks, etc. People are looking out for others to help. 

**COLOMBIA:** I think that people have been responsible with handling this situation and have generated a spirit of solidarity with those most in need. 

**BULGARIA:** The law enforcement authorities are helpful and sharp for avoiding social tense and unrest at one side and to allow people normal life on the other side. Such a behaviour has never been seen before. It impressed me so much. 

**HUNGARY:** Our local community has separate behaviours about this pandemic, some of them are doing the things which for the authorities ask, some of them doesn't. 



**JAPAN:** Pretty impressed by those giant shopping malls to close down even it is not an enforcement by government. On Telework most of the big firm able to comply that but not the SME which still have half of staff at office and rest in office. Unfortunately, we too are doing that due to most of the medical equipment we handle do need a lots of documents to file and clear and most need original copy. 

What are you finding is helping you on a personal basis during this time? Have you started a new hobby, exercise, anything which you have been meaning to do and now have found the time to do it?

**COLOMBIA:** My work at home, doing exercises, reading and watching tv help a lot.



**FRANCE:** Keeping working is helping :) I do home exercise to just maintain shape a little bit as I usually run but seems too risky for now.



**SRI LANKA:**

I had a time to stay with my children without thinking any other works. We play badminton, football etc. Also, it has pushed all of us to do prayers and study the bible and honour Gods word.



**OMAN:** Aaaaaah I had a huge guitar collection that burned down and in which I lost 62 guitars most of them autographed. I had a few friends that pushed me to start collecting again and 10 of them even gave me their guitars to start me off. So I did and built a totally standalone place for my guitars and started collecting the same got quite a few autographed and managed to get some of the collectors guitars in like the 120th anniversary Les Paul, Ibanez -Joe Satriani, Fender's Jimi Hendrix, Roland's Fender etc etc. Spent lots of time during this lockdown period opening, cleaning and getting the guitar room ready.....it's the only thing that is keeping me sane, besides the dogs and all the other animals on my farm. Family all being together also plays a huge role.



**IRELAND:** Are you joking? WFH means "work from home". In our business, freight never stops, there is always something moving. Getting a little more exercise than I would on a normal office day. Definitely no time for new hobbies but my wife expects that because I am in the house, I have more time to help with cooking and cleaning! Does she not know about the freight business by now, after more than 40 years of marriage?? The most challenging aspect of all this is lack of human interaction. Sure, we can all talk on WhatsApp and Skype, but it is not the same as hugging your kids or grand kids or have them visit you at home. Human touch has vanished for the moment, and that's the sad part.



**LITHUANIA:** Trying to keep business alive - no new activities possible. I'm at the office full time since transport business is not stopped by quarantine.



**CHILE:** No doubt I have not had more time, the unifying systems of work, establishing protocols, the one that the staff understands and applies, has taken a couple of weeks, I am sure that this would improve our future, but we are sowing very hard. On weekends and given the lockdown has allowed me to discover and start with green topiary art, first watching it on YouTube and on the weekend in the garden cutting everything to shape it in the future.



**KUWAIT:** Re-organizing and simply current system or change. Time to spend time with family and playing cards at home. Learn and reading some books, news and YouTube videos.



**GERMANY:** Basically, nothing has changed for me or my family. The only thing that has changed is that the garage has been cleaned up again.



**JAPAN:** Yes, we do more exercise at home and we also brought a workout exercise machine in office. At home. I read more books and learnt how to cook better now.



**SIERRA LEONE:** The good thing is that we are not in complete lockdown. Our offices are open, the seaport is open, and we are able to work from 0900hrs to 1800hrs. We move around. We try to exercise as well. One good thing is that I have been wanting to learn to bake bread for myself. This I was able to accomplish.



**NORWAY:** A lot of outdoor exercise in our beautiful and scarcely populated nature.



**MEXICO:** Exercise for me is a daily experience, I miss my gym and my family, but I have adapted to exercise at home and early bike rides with all the measures implemented. I have had the opportunity to check my car and motorcycle that i have not used in a long time.



**ITALY:** Unfortunately, not, because the job takes most of my day and the other part is dedicated to the family, in essence not much has changed.



**BULGARIA:** In my world all seems to be unchanged. Only walking along seaside is missing for me a lot.



**HUNGARY:** I tried Yoga and meditation, it is help for the mental health, it's really nice, I just tried for the time, and I really liked it.



**UAE:** As usual working from home and spending time with family and hobbies.



**AUSTRALIA:** Bought a lot of weights and made home gym with my son. Taking the dog for walks more often and especially good family chats to avoid stupid fights, we are all adapting to this, we all have to give up something communication is essential like in a business.



**AUSTRALIA:** Just working and walking. Starting to see my adult children a lot more.



# How are you preparing for the post-pandemic future?



## AUSTRALIA:

Waiting for the big multinational forwarders to screw up big time, they are already struggling and smaller companies like ours will benefit from it. Right at this moment we are taking it week by week. Our primary goal is to survive, and we will do that, but managing correctly is important.



**JAPAN:** Actually, we have a small bar inside the office and we temporary close that. Once it is over we will fill-up wine/beer/sake to have a big bang!!



**HUNGARY:** We are doing our best to reopen our office, planning new developments our website and our logistic systems.



**IRELAND:** The \$6000 question, what will post lock-down look like. There will be a new normal, but what will that be? Everyone is anxious for this to be over, but there is no magic bullet, this will continue for some time to come. We will have to adjust to a new way of life, but companies will adjust, airlines and shipping lines will become inventive. There will be business casualties in all spheres of business, but let's hope, not too many. I think we are all itching to get back to work and resume our routines or as close as possible.



**OMAN:** There is going to be a crunch and we will have to start picking up the pieces, but it is now that I see more clearly the people I want to work with. Planning on offering everybody that has stuck with us and gone beyond the call of duty a share in the business which will automatically make the business grow stronger and faster sadly a few people will have to be let go as well.



**KUWAIT:** Organizing data, information and quick communication. Learnt a new lesson, how to unite the staff, credit control with the client, quick support. Thank god for everything so far safe but not sure future.



**MEXICO:** Before the pandemic I tried to make my team work at home as of today it is totally possible, we have had a loss of work, but not for alarms, the high season is near, and we have everything ready to face it.



**SINGAPORE:** Business will resume normally or pick up only next year.



**COLOMBIA:** Scheduling online meetings.



**NORWAY:** We circulate half-time in the Office, so 50% manned at all times. We are doing some upgrading of data systems and working out plans on marketing activities once travel is easier.



**GERMANY:** After the pandemic? When will that be? 2023? The future lies in worldwide business relations. Europe as well as USA want to move the production of various products from China back to their own countries. Independence between states is being sought. Our activities as forwarding agents will change. It is not possible to prepare oneself at present. We must wait and see how and where the flow of goods will shift.



**SRI LANKA:** I believe we will have more potential in the future. New trends and markets will be open. Mostly government officials will give an aggressive benefits to exporters and it will help to handle more exports volume out of the country, also all over the world focus China for imports and I hope certain percentage of Chinese market share will be split to other Asian countries as well. Every company will be kept at least two optional suppliers in different countries instead of sticking with one. Also, we should closely monitor all the customers, specially collecting freight and clearance payments from them, need to minimize credit levels and periods.



**SIERRA LEONE:** One can't say as businesses are hard hit. We depend on the business of others as we are service providers. We are ready to work any amount as long as we are given the job to do.



**BANGLADESH:** We shall launch operation resilience to manage high demand products like medical equipment (Respirators, Ventilators), medical PPE etc.



**CHILE:** With the recession to portals, I'm checking the debtor accounts to keep them at bay to avoid after the non-payment.



**UAE:** Need to make more business in the days ahead to cover the current bleeding, stay strong and work hard.



**ITALY:** From a working point of view we are organizing the work again because we are sure that it will start again in a non-progressive way. We are preparing our spirit, and our mind. and then we are trying to change our mind and our daily behaviours, for example we must understand that the use of the mask is not only important but fundamental. While in the office we will implement all the regulations in force to avoid further contagions.



**INDIA:** Making a proper schedule on priority basis.



# What future problems do you anticipate for our industry/and or the world?

**FRANCE:** Increase of rates of standard consumer product. Probably raise of unemployment and austerity as government was planning it anyway they will have now a good reason to justify it.



**HUNGARY:** To restart the national deliveries.



**JAPAN:** We all learnt how this outbreak hurt us and we able to cope better if there is any similar type of virus outbreak. I am sure all governments too learnt a great deal and what happened this time will be the last time we are going to witness in our lifetime, I hope. We will all be better and stronger for sure.



**MEXICO:** We will have a difficult year in the economy, but we expect a rebound effect for the end of the year and for 2021.



**LITHUANIA:** Trying to live through this first.



**CHILE:** Recession globally. Mass layoffs and a new restructuring of the service.



**SIERRA LEONE:** We don't want to anticipate problems but a bright future. A saying goes like this - When the Elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.



**NORWAY:** The sentiment towards nationalism is growing as is call for more self-sufficiency. Should this expand, we may see less transports and other modes. For Norway we believe the export industries will be less affected, however, a significant decline in investments within the oil and heavy industries is expected, leading to much lower project volumes. Imports are expected to find new sources closer to "home".



**OMAN:** Cash flow is going to be the biggest issue in our part of the world we have ALL the big players with deep pockets there, so they obviously are in a better position, but if we can cut a niche for ourselves we should be alright. Swift connections has always been a diverse business model in which we deal and are involved with various verticals and not only freight business. Rent a car, Electromechanical, Music sound and lights, Relocations, Personal effects, Project cargo.



**UAE:** Hope we will have more business conversion in the days ahead.



**ITALY:** Unfortunately, as China has already done, there will be a lot of speculation from the airlines, ships and perhaps even freight forwarders. I sincerely hope that the most important companies in these sectors will come together in order not to bring the market to total collapse.





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