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Check against delivery!

**Remarks by the Mayor of the City of Cologne, Henriette Reker,
Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board, at the Koelnmesse Annual Press Conference
at 11:00 a.m. on 13 July 2017 in the Großer Sitzungssaal of the Administrative Building
(Messehochhaus)**

The financial figures for Cologne are better than ever before. The numbers that were published last week by IT.NRW are putting me in a good mood – and you too, I'm sure. Cologne's gross domestic product increased in 2015 to the record value of more than €62 billion – an increase of 8.3% compared to the previous year. No other city in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia achieved an increase that was even close.

However, we shouldn't rest on our laurels. Instead, we must remain ambitious and strive to maintain and increase Cologne's appeal as a business location.

This means boosting our city's economy in ways that are visible. As you know, we are currently considering how to organize our business development activities so that they can have the most positive impact on our city. I am confident that I will be able to submit our recommendations this autumn.

The absolutely central pillar of Cologne as a business location is our Koelnmesse.

The company and the new site that is now under construction are thus a part – and in many respects also drivers – of our overarching urban development activities. On many levels, Koelnmesse's intense work on its future development supports our urban initiatives to create the foundation for an attractive business location and a good quality of life for future generations.

“Transformation into the trade fair company of the future” is therefore the leitmotif of the Annual Report for 2016, which is being presented to us today.

The basic precondition of all plans for the future is successful financial management in the present. And in this regard Koelnmesse is steadily continuing to send us positive messages – with figures that once again clearly exceed its own expectations.

As the Mayor of Cologne and the Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board, I'm delighted by this development, because it creates the conditions for Koelnmesse's continued promotion of Cologne as a trade fair and business location.

The company's successful staging of major trade fairs in itself has a positive effect on our city. It makes Cologne, as well as many of our city's businesses and trades, well-known to high-calibre guests from the worldwide business community.

In 2016, significantly more than 40 per cent of all overnight stays in Cologne – about 2.4 million – were once again due to Koelnmesse.

When the Koelnmesse 3.0 investment project takes on a more concrete shape in the near future, Koelnmesse will reach a further milestone of urban development. Starting in 2021, the planned Confex® Hall will provide the expansion of Cologne's meeting and exhibition facilities that we have so sorely missed. The Confex® Hall will bring new high-quality conferences to Cologne and also provide us with crucial advantages in a competitive environment. As a result, Koelnmesse will become the core of a new hotspot on the right bank of the Rhine. Two weeks ago I participated in the laying of the foundation stone of MesseCity.

Moreover, the measures that are part of Koelnmesse 3.0 blend seamlessly into the projects of SmartCity Cologne, which is promoting the conscious and sustainable use of energy. We are supporting these projects in Cologne, together with companies, private individuals, associations, and government agencies.

The Koelnmesse 3.0 programme includes the company's own cogeneration power plant as well as a district heating connection, both of which went into operation in 2016. These facilities cover the heating supply and the basic power supply throughout the entire exhibition centre.

Koelnmesse is one of the most important drivers of the Digital Hub Cologne initiative. Through its trade fairs and events, it repeatedly brings together companies and digital innovations, thus promoting digitalization, making medium-sized companies fit for the future, and contributing to Cologne's development into a hub for start-ups and new companies.

In the past year, the city of Cologne and Koelnmesse have once again moved forward over long distances in tandem. Koelnmesse continues to take its responsibility for Cologne as a business location very seriously. It is making all the efforts that are needed to safeguard its own future – on its own initiative and, as you know, with its own financial resources. It continues to be a key component of Cologne's and our region's economy. It gets involved, in the positive sense of the word.

And along with all these activities, Koelnmesse is operating successfully, as we will now hear in detail. For Koelnmesse as well, success is a team achievement.

But even the best teams need a good team leader. That's what Gerald Böse has been for almost ten years now. During this time he has led Koelnmesse out of the financial and economic crisis and placed it with lasting effect among the Top Ten international trade fair companies. Now that this contract has been extended until 2023, I look forward to continuing our fruitful cooperation. We need a strong Koelnmesse for the sustained development of our region.