

Marita Toikka, Mayor of Kouvola

Opening address (approx. 5 mins)

Departure of first container train from Kouvola to China 10 November 2017

My Dear Ambassadors, Minister, our Partners and International and Local Guests,

It is my great honour to welcome you all to Kouvola, Finland's railway city, to witness this historic moment: Regular container train traffic is beginning between Kouvola and China. The first train, the **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express**, will shortly depart. The opening of this new 'Silk Road' will strengthen Kouvola's position as a hub of traffic between Asia and Europe. Kouvola is already today a modern, international centre of cargo traffic – and in future will be an even more competitive player in the field of logistics.

It has required much work and close cooperation between many different organisations to get to where we are now. Above all it has required single-mindedness, persistence and a belief in the success of the project. **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express** is a demonstration of what can be achieved through cooperation. **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express** will bring efficiency to transportation and a competitive edge to rail traffic. It will open new business opportunities and enable growth in both import and export volumes.

I am proud to declare, that Kouvola is continuing its tradition as the railway city of Finland. Kouvola is a railway junction, and railways have played a significant role in the city's history. The railway has created a foundation for the development of the region's vitality and the birth of industry. Today, from a perspective of rail freight, Kouvola is the key location in Finland and the greatest trainer of railway professionals. In the future, the City of Kouvola also wants to invest in the logistics sector, particularly in the development of railway logistics, and to enable its continued growth.

Kouvola is also home to the ongoing, partly EU-funded Rail-Road Terminal project, Kouvola RRT. Through this, the city's position as a significant player in logistics is being further strengthened. An advanced intermodal area is being built in Kouvola, as well as a loading siding more than 1 km long, which will be able to handle extra-long trains without having to split them.

My Dear Guests,

We can truly say that Kouvola offers many opportunities and competitiveness to international logistics. **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express** is the first step towards new openings and the growth of cargo flows. Interest in the new route has been sparked, and I believe that, within a few years, we will see daily traffic instead of just a weekly train. In future, the modern Kouvola Rail-Road Terminal and the handling of trains more than a kilometre long connected to a fast container train route to Asia will offer Kouvola opportunities to become a key logistics operator on a European scale.

I would like to warmly thank Kouvola Innovation Oy for the fine and uncompromising work that you have done in order to open **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express**. Thanks also to all our international and domestic partners. Without all of your input, we would not be here now.

I am very happy, that you are here today to accompany the first **Railgate Finland Kouvola-China Express** container train on its maiden journey. This is a wonderful moment that will never be forgotten. Thank you!