Rede von Herrn Oberbürgermeister Jürgen Roters anlässlich des Empfangs von Gregory A. Ballard, Oberbürgermeister der Partnerstadt Indianapolis, am 29. Juni 2012, 11 Uhr, Historisches Rathaus, Hansasaal

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Mayor Ballard,
Mrs. Ballard,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

allow me to extend a warm welcome to you here in the Cologne town hall, one of the oldest in Germany.

I am delighted about your visit and also interest in Cologne as business location, as a cultural and economic centre in Germany and of course as your German sister-city.

I know that your stay here is quite short but I hope that today the programme will offer you many business relationships in Cologne.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Indianapolis and Cologne can look back on a vital relationship with great activities.

Thanks to our city partnership, we have looked beyond our local environments and gathered new experiences and insights in the most varied fields. Within the context of our partnership we have many projects in the fields of economic investments, cultural exchange, sharing experiences by professional groups, the cooperation between schools and library.

And next year we will celebrate 25 years partnership between Indianapolis and Cologne. With this transatlantic partnership we made an active contribution to German-American friendship on a municipal level. And I hope that our partnership will continue to flourish in the coming years.
Dr. Norbert Burger, former Mayor of Cologne, who died only some weeks ago, founded 11 twin city relationships during his term of office from 1980 to 1999. In 1988 he founded in a little while 5 twin city relationships amongst others with Corinto / El Realejo in Nicaragua, Cork in Ireland, Thessaloniki in Greece and – that’s the point I would like to underline – with Indianapolis and Volgograd in Russia concurrently together here in the Historic Town Hall, exactly on 28th of November, 1988.

His main intention in his period of office and I guess in his whole life was building up bridges between people, between cities and nations for a better world of understanding and tolerance. So next year the City of Cologne will not only celebrate five big jubilees with their twin cities, the City of Cologne will also take the opportunity to pay homage to Norbert Burger, our honorary citizen since 1999, directly after his term in office.

Without people like him, committed and acting with vision, we all weren’t here today. But also today, we could be proud to realize nearby 25 flourishing years of our twin city relationship.

And I am very happy that our cities received support from both the numerous members of the “Indianapolis-Cologne Sister City Partnership Committee” under the chairmanship of Martin Baier and the “Indianapolis-Cologne Friendship Circle” under the chairmanship of Mr. Volkmar Schultz.

I would like to take the opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all members of the associations and their respective chairmen, to you, Martin Baier and to you, Volkmar Schultz, for this commitment.

Mayor Ballard,
I think, we both share the same intentions in terms of our sister city partnership: We do not only want to deepen the social and cultural links between the two cities, but also the contacts on economic level. I know that you have an economic meeting with the Cologne Chamber of Commerce with companies and our economic department of this morning. I am convinced that the further discussions today and the guidance to Magnet-Physik GmbH will offer you new economic contacts here in Cologne.
Beyond this, please allow me to further present Cologne to you in a few words as a business location, but also as a city with quality of life and with cosmopolitan people, who always look forward to the visits of American guests. With a million inhabitants, Cologne is the fourth-largest city in Germany after Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. If we consider the economic region of Cologne which also includes the Federal City of Bonn, then we have total of around 3 million inhabitants and you see it is a strong economic region.

Cologne lies at the heart of Europe and recommends itself as a springboard to the Western European markets and as a top address – especially for internationally-operating companies. Several international firms in which foreign capital is involved, today already appreciate these advantages in Cologne.

As in the past, I am convinced that the exchange between the United States and our region will continue to play a crucial role for our future economical development.

Mayor Ballard,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
the dynamics of the economic location speak for Cologne. But there is also no lack of quality of life and culture – neither for the residents of Cologne nor for the numerous visitors who we welcome to Cologne. The leading attraction is undoubtedly Cologne Cathedral, our landmark and the mostly frequently-visited historic monument in Germany. I hope you will find time to visit the Cathedral.

On the folkloristic side we have the famous Cologne Carnival that casts its spell on millions of people every year in February and March. But also contemporary art and culture make their contribution to ensuring that the tourist destination of Cologne registers increasing numbers of visitors. Museums like the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud or the Museum Ludwig enjoy an excellent reputation and classical as well as modern music has an excellent venue in the Philharmonic.

But in the end it is people living here who are responsible for Cologne’s image as a European, an international metropolis. As a city with one million inhabitants, that includes more than 150,000 people of other nationalities from about 180 countries all over the world, Cologne is really an international city.
Mayor Ballard,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that Cologne will keep on investing a huge amount of effort to ensure that the relationship between our two cities will continue to flourish as in the past and we can look to the future with confidence and curiosity.

I would like to wish a wonderful and interesting stay in Cologne again! And I hope to see you in our 25 anniversary year 2013.