I would like to welcome you to the 11th Indo-German ICT Conference! I am very pleased that the City of Cologne is now hosting this important event for the sixth time.

The conference is an essential part of the Cologne India Week. Its goal is to promote the exchange of experience and to maintain and intensify established contacts and make new ones.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

the relationship between Cologne and India has grown in recent years. This is helped by the India Initiative started by the Cologne a few years ago. This program has already led to many successful projects in many diverse fields.

The Cologne India Week is taking place for the fifth time this year. This series of events has expanded year by year and has gained international standing. We’re happy to welcome numerous guests from Germany and abroad to our cathedral city. For one week we will be dealing with the bilateral relations between India and Germany, trade as well as education and science. In lectures and discussions we will
learn more about the social and economic opportunities in India. In addition, cultural events, including Indian literature, art and music, will form part of the program.

Today’s conference offers us the excellent opportunity to take a closer look at the information and communication technology sector which is so important for both our countries. What place would be more suitable for such a conference than Cologne, which, together with its surrounding region, is one of the strongest, most exciting and most innovative regions in Europe?!

According to the Cologne Chamber of Commerce and Industry, over 11,000 companies from the ICT sector can currently be found in the Cologne region. Roughly 95 per cent of them belong to the IT sector, 31 per cent to the Internet industry and 27 per cent to the software industry. A focus is on firms in the data processing and IT sector, with 68 per cent, and import-export firms with 28 per cent.

The mixture of large, medium-sized and small companies, as well as our wide range of products and services, reflect the diversity of Cologne. Global players, such as Microsoft and Wipro Technologies, are located here in our city on the Rhine, along with small and medium-sized companies, service providers and import-export companies. Business people and creative minds from all areas, as well as employees from many nations, are happy to call Cologne their home. Here they will find tolerance, diversity, and ideal conditions for both their professional and personal development.

Cologne has been a melting pot for more than 180 nations. For example, Turkish, Italian, Spanish and also Indian people contribute to the colorful mixture. More than 30 per cent of the people of Cologne have an international background. We welcome those willing to settle here from all parts of Germany and from around the world – because they make sure that Cologne stays young and dynamic even when other cities and regions have to struggle with declining population figures and an ageing population.
Cologne will always be a modern city. We are continuously tapping our potential and we support the innovations which let businesses and life in Cologne grow. With regard to modern technologies, for example, we play a pioneering role.

Our current project, “SmartCity Cologne,” is breaking new ground. SmartCity Cologne is a joint project of Cologne enterprises, individuals, associations and the city administration; its goal is a sustainable and responsible use of energy resources. With SmartCity we are working together on the challenges of climate change. Technologies and services are tested which will shape eco-logical urban life in the future. These include the promotion and use of sustainable energy, concepts for CO₂ reduction and activities for saving energy and increasing energy efficiency. Because of this project numerous chances and business opportunities for Indian and German enterprises will arise.

Moreover, we are the first city in Germany to test the mobile High Speed Internet LTE. This broadband mobile phone network of the fourth generation enables the safe and fast transmission of large amounts of data. The Cologne region is also at the forefront in Germany with regard to fiber optic cables. Cologne provides one of the fastest networks in the whole of Europe. We have almost complete broadband coverage. In addition, there are successful regional carriers with their own telecommunication networks. They provide information and communication technology offers using creative plans. Furthermore, a research and education environment with enormous innovation potential is one of our strengths. This provides the best conditions for a strong and dynamic ICT sector in the region.

What’s more, the links between individuals, enterprises and networks are additionally promoted. So in this sense the title of today’s conference - “Towards a shared economy” suits our city very well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cologne is a shining example that the Share Economy is not just a trend. More things than ever before are shared in diverse ways: digital content, physical goods, participation in commercial, cultural or social projects.
If you walk through the streets of Cologne, for example, you will notice that there is a strong trend towards transportation sharing. Almost everywhere in the city you will discover various car and bike sharing offers. They provide spontaneity and make your life a lot easier. At the same time, transportation sharing also helps to save money.

Sharing does have advantages and disadvantages. The effects of the Share Economy in all areas of business are important to all business people and entrepreneurs. You are correct to be concerned about the changing power of consumers, shifting borders between producers and consumers and the blurring boundaries between professional and private life. How you deal with these facts will determine whether you will win or lose in this ever-changing business game. You have gathered here today to discuss the impact on your businesses and business models.

In this context I would like to thank the initiators, organizers and assistants of the 11th Indo-German ICT Conference 2013. I would like to mention Mr Bäumer by name as well as the representatives of the two industry associations BITKOM, Mr Bonn, and NASSCOM, Mr Krishnakumar Natarajan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I hope you will have many discussions today about the complex and special issues of the Share Economy.

Future exchanges between India and Cologne depend on a continuation and intensification of our solid relationship. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry has registered a total of 318 companies in the Cologne region that maintain a trade relationship with the subcontinent. Some of them even have their own business premises there. I am convinced that there are many other important links and joint development opportunities in the ICT sector.