

## **PRESS INFORMATION**

### **Vienna hosts a successful discussion of the international future of the railways**

**Subheading: The International Railway Congress 2019 was a complete success. Over 500 international guests, more than 100 well-known companies and representatives from over 20 countries took part and met an intermediate objective by signing seven memoranda of understanding.**

**Vienna, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019** – *The International Railway Congress 2019 in Vienna was the first in a series of congresses that should take place over at least the next three years. The largest industry get-together of its type successfully met its principal goal of offering top managers from the transport and logistics sectors an ideal platform for exchanging ideas and deepening their mutual business relationships. The clearest confirmation of this success is the total of seven cooperation agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoU) agreed at the political and corporate level.*

More than 500 guests spent two days exchanging ideas, largely about the opportunities offered by the multinational 'Broad Gauge' railway project and about the potential of the project as an environmentally-friendly global gateway for transporting goods from around the world. The outstanding international top speakers made an expert contribution to this great success.

Seven memoranda of understanding were signed on the sidelines of the congress. The most decisive political MoU is the one signed by the transport ministries of Russia, Slovakia and Austria regarding the realisation of the 1,520-mm-gauge freight line linking Košice, Bratislava and Vienna. This is a further step in the preparation of the international treaty between the countries. In addition to this, six further bilateral memoranda of understanding were concluded between companies. The effectiveness of the event as a means of establishing the direction and as a platform for developing political and corporate relationships was impressively demonstrated by the first International Railway Congress.

Following its conclusion of the 'Silk Road Agreement' in 2018 the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology is already able to celebrate its next major success in the field of infrastructure. In the words of General Secretary Andreas Reichhardt, "the Memorandum of Understanding between Russia, Slovakia and Austria represents another major step towards extending the 1,520-mm-gauge railway to the Twin City Region. The Austrian Federal Government has a huge interest in the country becoming the European gateway for global freight traffic. The jobs and the value that this will create offer an opportunity that we are keen to grasp."

Harald Mahrer, President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) cites the positive boost to Business Location Austria: "The future of mobility is closely linked with economic growth and a competitive business location. The railways play a key role in this process. And as a global player in the railway industry Austria has a huge interest in the expansion of the rail infrastructure." Against this background the newly signed MoU represents an important step towards the improved integration of international rail transport.



In his closing statement to the congress the CEO of ÖBB Holding, Mag. Andreas Matthä, notes that “railways provide a link between companies and countries. They move both people and freight and create good connections – also for the new Silk Road Initiative. The International Railway Congress is perhaps the best starting point for intensifying international cooperation in this area and moving the relationship between Austria and Russia forwards. Hence I would be delighted if this congress returned to Vienna in the coming years as a regular element of the ongoing discussion within the international railway community.”

Oleg Belozеров, General Director – Chairman of the Board of RZD “Russian Railways” is keen to put on record that “this project will raise the work of the railways to a new level. We will test new technologies as a means of speeding up movement across borders and harmonising legal issues. We must put all our efforts into resolving these issues as quickly as possible,” said the Chairman of the Board Mr Belozеров.

Hubert Jeneral, President and Initiator of the IRC 2019, is highly pleased and very grateful: “I would like to thank all guests and international speakers for attending. The numerous memoranda of understanding already provide proof of the success of the congress, but this is just the start. I am particularly grateful to our partners BMVIT, ÖBB and RZD for the excellent cooperation and to Harald Mahrer and the WKÖ for their wonderful hospitality. The cooperation between politics and business is a prerequisite if Austria is to take full advantage of this once-in-a-century opportunity. As the organiser of the conference I can sense extremely positive signals coming from both sides,” concluded the President.

For the International Railway Congress the end of this year’s event means that preparations for next year are already well under way. Successful discussions have already been held with partners, guests and speakers regarding a continuation in coming years. This immediate and detailed planning of IRC 2020 will ensure that the event remains the most important platform for the top management of the railway industry.

Further press information and executive summaries of the strategic sessions can be found here:

<https://rail-congress.com/press-center/>

**Further queries**

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