**Address of Mr. Vojko Obersnel, Mayor of the City of Rijeka**

**At the Opening Ceremony of Rijeka – 2020 European Capital of Culture**

**At the Croatian National Theatre Ivan pl. Zajc, on the 1st February 2020, at 17:00 hours**

**Respected Madam Minister Obuljen Koržinek, Envoy of the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia,**

**Respected Minister Butković, Envoy of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament,**

**Respected Vice-President of the European Commission, Madam Šuica,**

**Respected Ministers,**

**Esteemed Guests, Dear Friends,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Rijeka is at the eve of the biggest happening ever occurred in our city and we are ready to accept this great challenge.

Get ready, we are setting sails for the big journey, for the great adventure of our generation, we are steaming to our destination, to

**The Port of Diversity.**

The target of the journey was not chosen by accident. Rijeka already has its own story: its history that created it and changed; an identity so diverse that it is sometimes elusive; a mentality always seeking for better and more; attitudes that do not allow the different to be less valuable. We have put together all of this in our programme we offer for your journey and experience during the 366 days ahead of us. The Port of Diversity will be an intriguing intersection of projects, ideas, artists and creative minds, and themes that connect them and **us** will be Water, Work and Migration.

Even now, we know it already; one year will be too little for everything we want to show to Europe and the world, from small City District festivals to art projects that will reach thousands and thousands of viewers. Actually, **the Port of Diversity is meant to stay here for good**, to set a mark and make a change, to **leave a legacy**. That is why we build a new Culture Quart with new museums and the Children's House, and we include all citizens and create knowledge for new generations.

There is a lot of accomplished work behind us. Rijeka won this title in the competition of as many as nine Croatian cities. For this title, together with Irish Galway, we have fought in front of the European Commission Expert Panel – thank you once again for your confidence! **In the creation of programmes of the Port of Diversity, thousands of people are involved**, willing and able to show creativity, energy, provocation, art, enthusiasm and pride. To every one of them a big THANK YOU! Likewise, BIG THANKS to all who have supported us on our way, especially **the Croatian Government** and **the Ministry of Culture**. This is not only the most important project for Rijeka, it is also the largest Croatian culture project; a project which makes Rijeka and Croatia become pulse of European cultural story. All this happen at the very moment when Croatia, as the youngest member of the European family, presides over the Council of the European Union, aware of its values and feeling secure on its European path.

Every journey, every voyage always gives a great opportunity to discover and learn, to find a chance to peek beneath the surface, to see behind the walls and the façades, to discover stories and to meet people. The greatest value of this city are those who live in it – its citizens. Open, tolerant, always hospitable, critical minds, sometimes stubborn, quite self-denying, but also loud when needed.

Therefore, today, at the beginning of this adventure, which we all expect with impatience and responsibility, I invite you to:

**Berth in our Port of Diversity, and discover an unusual and diverse city.**