



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic said today on RTS morning news that the summit of China and 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe would show that friendly relations could mean good economic relations as well.

Pointing out that Serbia would have both economic and political benefits from the summit, Minister Dacic said that Serbia was the greatest friend of China in Europe, which was confirmed by the decision to hold the third summit in Belgrade.

"The decision to hold the summit in Serbia demonstrates that China sees Serbia as a friend, thus strengthening our bilateral position", said Dacic stressing that this was the most important event in Belgrade since the Non-Aligned Movement summit.

"This initiative has been considered for several years and is part of China's relationship with the EU; I recall that the EU is China's major economic partner, and therefore it is not contrary to the policy of Brussels. This is the third summit – the previous ones were held in Warsaw and Bucharest", said the Serbian Foreign Minister.

He stressed that China allocated at least \$ 10 billion for investment in Central and Eastern European countries participating in the summit.

"Romania and Poland are considerably larger than Serbia and, unlike other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, we have already prepared some projects", Dacic said.

He indicated, as examples, the Thermal Power Plant "Kolubara", part of the Turkish highway and Pupin bridge, which will be opened by the Prime Ministers of Serbia and China. He also said that there was a number of other projects, the largest being modernization of the Budapest-Belgrade railway.

"We have reached a stage when the signing of documents may also be likely. There were different ideas as to the railway speed and the proposal of 160 kilometers per hour has been reached, therefore almost everything is ready for signing", he said.

When it comes to the Chinese, said Dacic, the railway can be built in two years.

"Serbia should use this as an impetus to investment, which should enhance social development, and GDP growth", said Dacic.

As he pointed out, Serbia would have a political benefit from the summit, in terms of presenting Belgrade as the economic center of Europe, but an economic benefit as well, as a result of identifying certain projects which could be a function of social development.

Commenting on the arrival of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, Minister Dacic said that controversial issues would not be on the agenda, but only diplomatic cooperation in the region.