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**RUSSIA: SERBIA EXPECTED TO SIGN FREE-TRADE PACT WITH EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION**

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Russia's ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandr Botsan-Kharchenko, says Belgrade is expected to sign a free-trade pact with the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on October 25.

This is a significant event. The media are paying due attention to it, Botsan-Kharchenko said in a tweet on August 20.

He said Serbia's entry into the trade zone will signify its completely new stage of presence in Eurasia [by] entering a market with a capacity of over 182 million consumers and the combined gross domestic product of more than \$1.9 trillion.

Established in 2015, the EAEU comprises Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan as members.

A longtime ally of Moscow based on religious and cultural bonds, Serbia also is pursuing membership in the European Union and good relations with the United States.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic met with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in New York on August 20.

Pompeo encouraged Serbia to focus on its strategic goal [of integration into the EU] by accelerating domestic reforms and resuming negotiations with Kosovo based on mutual recognition, U.S. State Department spokesman Morgan Ortagus said.

Both Kosovo and Serbia have been told they must resolve their differences in order to make progress toward potential membership in the 28-member EU.

After years of stagnation, the time has come to finally end the conflicts of the 1990s and provide a secure and prosperous future for the people of Kosovo and Serbia, the governments of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States said in a statement released on August 13.

Pompeo and Vucic also discussed a vision of a stable, secure, and prosperous Western Balkans region, Ortagus said.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/ambassador-russia-expects-serbia-to-join-eurasian-economic-union-in-october/30120717.html>

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Kaynak/Source: