

August 4, 2022

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you are no doubt aware, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is a global threat to the interests and values of the United States. While the CCP seeks to become a regional hegemon in the Indo-Pacific, it is avidly working to divide our allies and partners around the world, especially in Europe, with hollow promises of cheap infrastructure financing and runaway profits. As such, I respectfully urge you and your administration to clearly communicate that the United States will support any decisions of Central and Eastern European countries to leave CCP-led international initiatives such as the 16+1 Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries format (16+1).

In 2012, the CCP founded 16+1 at a summit in Budapest. This format includes many longstanding American allies, including Poland, Czechia, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Romania, and others. According to CCP propaganda, 16+1's only aim is to support "growing ties in the areas of culture, education and tourism" between China and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. In reality, the CCP intends for this grouping to develop these countries' dependence on the Chinese economy and to increase the CCP's political influence in Europe.

In February 2021, Lithuania withdrew from 16+1 and announced its intention to establish closer trade relations with Taiwan because it saw the brutal reality of the CCP's objective for global dominance. According to Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, cooperation with the CCP brought "almost no benefits" to Lithuania. In retaliation for this decision, the CCP launched an unprecedented act of economic coercion against Lithuania. Overnight, the CCP blocked all trade and sanctioned companies that chose to still work with Lithuanian companies. Other Central and European nations are also looking to roll back their commitments to 16+1. In June 2022, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said that "unfulfilled expectations are leading [Czechia] to reconsider [its] participation" in 16+1.

The United States must support any country that leaves 16+1 and faces the same retaliation levied against Lithuania. At a minimum, I urge you to direct the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the U.S. Trade and Development Authority, and other relevant agencies and authorities to find any and all avenues to support investment in the key industries of these countries should they face economic pressure from the CCP. Tangible support should be accompanied by statements of support and high-level visits to countries. At a time

when the CCP is rhetorically and materially supporting Vladimir Putin's assault on the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, the United States must show it stands with its allies and partners in Central and Eastern Europe in the face of Chinese economic and political coercion.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator