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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Georgia, Russia Meet on WTO

By The Moscow Times

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Negotiations on Russia's accession to the WTO will begin between Georgian and Russian representatives in Bern on Wednesday. The Georgian delegation will be led by Tamara Koviridze, chief foreign affairs adviser to Prime Minister Mikheil Saakashvili.

Tbilisi will support Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization if Moscow agrees to Georgian control over customs points in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, said Akaki Minashvili, chairman of the Georgian parliament's foreign affairs committee.

"We demand the ability to keep track of the [customs] areas in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, what goods are being imported and exported from the regions," Minashvili said. "Who the observers will be is a matter for negotiation; maybe they will be Georgian customs agents."

TBILISI, Georgia — Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili is making a weeklong visit to the United States that will be focused on attracting investment to this former Soviet republic, his spokeswoman

Manana Manjgaladze said Tuesday.

Saakashvili plans to meet in New York with U.S. real estate mogul Donald Trump and sign a contract for an investment project, Manjgaladze said, The Associated Press reported. She gave no specifics.

Manjgaladze said Saakashvili's trip, which begins Thursday, will take him from New York to Miami, where he will promote tourism to Georgia, and then to Washington, where he has a meeting with the managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

Manjgaladze said Saakashvili also plans to meet with members of the U.S. Senate to discuss economic issues. Manjgaladze said Tbilisi has not softened its position on Russia's WTO membership bid.

AP

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