

WTO Talks With Georgia Held Up by Customs

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Saakashvili, left, and Donald Trump in New York announcing a major Georgian development project Thursday. **Lucas Jackson**

Georgia may resume talks next month on lifting its opposition to Russia's bid to join the World Trade Organization.

The two sides made no "significant" progress during negotiations in Switzerland earlier this week, Nikoloz Mchedlishvili, a spokesman for Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, said by telephone in the capital Tbilisi on Friday.

Mchedlishvili said Georgia objects to customs checkpoints in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Getting Russia into the World Trade Organization would help deal with issues about the openness of that nation's economy, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said Thursday

during a luncheon sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor.

"It is in our interest to bring the world's largest economy," which isn't subject to WTO rules, into the global trade group, Kirk said.

Senator Benjamin Cardin, a Maryland Democrat, said he was skeptical of voting to clear Russia for the WTO.

"I'm just not going to knee-jerk approve these agreements unless I know that we have effective remedies," Cardin told Kirk. "You only have certain leverage points. Once they are in the WTO, our chances of getting enforceable provisions in an understanding with the United States evaporates."

NEW YORK — Real estate mogul Donald Trump appeared at a New York news conference Thursday with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to announce a luxury development project there, The Associated Press reported.

Trump will make an initial investment in Georgia of \$250 million, according to the Georgian government web site. "Since the project is of high scales, the sum of it will increase," the web site quoted Trump as saying.

Georgia received \$553 million of foreign direct investment last year, the National Statistics Office said on its web site Friday, Bloomberg reported.

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