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Customs Union Still Targets WTO

By The Moscow Times

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MINSK — Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, which have formed a customs union, are in talks to join the World Trade Organization, guided by agreed positions, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said Monday.

"Nothing has changed since 2009. We confirm now, as we did before, that the WTO is an important strategic goal for us. We have been moving toward this goal in a tactically coordinated way, guided by the actual circumstances," Shuvalov told the press in Minsk on Friday.

"All changes in our tactical maneuvers reflect an agreed and mutually related position, of course. We act on the basis of consensus," Shuvalov said.

A single position has been negotiated and national agencies have been formed in charge of accession to the WTO, and they remain in contact with each other, he said.

"Each time we hold talks at our level, we discuss all aspects of how we should go on further,

in advance or afterwards," he also said.

The customs union's commission, which gathered in Minsk, also discussed a plan to form a free-trade zone of the customs union troika and the European Union, Shuvalov said.

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