

Details for WTO Entry Due in June

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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GENEVA — Russia must announce in June how it will end a raft of protectionist measures if it wants to join the World Trade Organization this year, the diplomat vetting Russia's entry to the trade body said Tuesday.

Leaders of the G8 group of the world's most advanced economies called last week for Russia to enter the 153-member body by the end of the year, a move expected to boost Russia's GDP as well as its international standing.

But Russia must first dismantle wide-ranging programs such as industrial subsidies, import limits on meat, red tape, foreign investment restrictions and health standards that slow trade, said the WTO's Russian Accession Working Group chairman.

"There is a lot of work still to be done and challenges indeed to deal with. Whether we conclude this year will depend on the speed at which the Russian Federation delivers the few required sections," chairman Stefan Haukur Johannesson told journalists after negotiations between WTO members and Russia.

For the complex talks to have time to hit this year's deadline, the WTO would need to see Russia's proposals by the end of June, the Icelandic diplomat said.

Russia's neighbor Georgia has opposed Russian accession since a brief war in 2008, but Johannesson said he was hopeful that a closed-door mediation process under way would resolve this.

Russia will also have to guarantee that a customs union launched in 2010 with Belarus and Kazakhstan will not override obligations to the WTO, he said.

The World Bank estimates that WTO entry could increase the size of the Russian economy by 3.3 percent in the midterm and 11 percent in the long term. It expects that Russian import tariffs would fall from 14 percent on average to 8 percent.

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