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No Breakthrough in Georgian WTO Talks

By The Moscow Times

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TBILISI — Talks between Georgia and Russia over Moscow's bid to join the World Trade Organization ended without agreement Saturday, and Georgia said it would block Russian accession unless Moscow's position changes.

"The negotiations are over, and we can say that they collapsed, ended with no result at all," said Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergi Kapanadze, head of his country's delegation to the talks in Switzerland.

Kapanadze said the sticking point was Russia's refusal to let Georgia have access to information about trade in the breakaway Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Moscow recognized as independent nations after a five-day war in 2008.

Kapanadze said the talks were the last agreed round of negotiations "and we do not see any sense in continuing talks just for the sake of talks." A Russian source close to negotiations said there was an agreement to resume on Oct. 17.

In pointed remarks last week, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin urged the United States and the European Union to help overcome Georgia's objections.

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