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# Georgians Accept Swiss WTO Proposal

By The Moscow Times

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TBILISI — Georgia accepted on Thursday a new proposal from Swiss mediators aimed at resolving a border trade dispute and paving the way for Russia to join the World Trade Organization, a senior Georgian diplomat said.

Sergi Kapanadze, deputy foreign minister and the head of Georgia's delegation to the Swiss-mediated talks, said the proposal would provide for the electronic exchange of trade data and international monitoring of the borders between Russia and two breakaway Georgian regions.

"If Russia accepts this proposal, it will become a WTO member. ... There is nothing unacceptable for Russian in this proposal as this document is a result of compromise," Kapanadze said, adding that Russia had yet to agree to the proposal.

Russia is aiming to become a WTO member at the ministerial conference in December, and the border trade dispute is the last remaining substantial obstacle for Russia's accession, with other remaining issues seen as technicalities.

Georgia wants to have access to information about trade in the breakaway regions since some of the goods end up in territory controlled by the Tbilisi government.

Kapanadze did not say whether the new plan implied a physical presence of international monitors at the border — an idea Russia opposed in the past.

Kapanadze said the new proposal was "status neutral," implying that it did not refer to the political status of Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which Moscow recognized as independent nations after a five-day war in 2008.

"It is the final proposal, it won't and cannot be changed. The game is really over now, and it is up to the Russians to decide," Kapanadze said.

Russia needs several days to review the Swiss mediators' proposal, Russia's WTO accession negotiator said Thursday. ⊠

⊠"In order to define our stance toward this proposal, we need several days," Maxim Medvedkov said, adding that Russia could come up with an answer early next week.

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