

Ghosn Sees Big Future in Controlling AvtoVAZ

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Carlos Ghosn, chief executive officer of Nissan Motor and Renault, said the two carmakers and Russian partner AvtoVAZ increased their combined vehicle sales by 10 percent last year to a record.

Sales reached 4.67 million at Yokohama-based Nissan, 2.72 million at Renault and 638,000 at AvtoVAZ, Ghosn said Tuesday at the Automotive News World Congress in Detroit. That helped combined sales climb to 8.03 million last year from 7.28 million in 2010, he said.

"Partnerships are key to regional growth and a key reason the alliance achieved a new sales record," he said. "Our industry has high fixed costs. Quickly meeting demands of new customers around the world is easier when you share investment costs through strategic alliances."

Nissan's growth in the United States and China helped the company outperform Toyota Motor

and Honda Motor, which saw sales decline last year after natural disasters in Japan and Thailand disrupted production. The company is planning to increase its reliance on those markets this year amid a projected drop in European demand.

In the United States, Nissan boosted sales by 15 percent last year, following an 18 percent increase in deliveries in 2010. Ghosn said separately Monday that his goal is to raise Nissan sales sufficiently to give the company a 10 percent global market share.

Nissan and Renault are in talks to own a majority of AvtoVAZ, with Ghosn saying this week that a deal may be completed within weeks. The comments come less than a month after AvtoVAZ chief executive Igor Komarov said the talks might be completed in March. Renault and Nissan have received the Russian government's approval to own a majority stake in the Soviet-era Lada maker. Renault bought 25 percent of Russia's largest carmaker in 2008 for \$1 billion.

Volkswagen, Europe's largest carmaker, said this month that it saw group sales climb 14 percent to 8.16 million in 2011. That's similar to the growth reported by South Korea's Hyundai Motor and partner Kia Motors.

Ghosn said Wednesday that the alliance would help them boost sales of electric vehicles to a cumulative 1.5 million units by 2016. Nissan, which sold 21,000 Leaf electric cars in 2011, plans to double deliveries of those automobiles this year, he said.

AvtoVAZ boosted sales in Russia by 10.6 percent to 578,387 vehicles last year, the Tolyatti-based company said in an e-mailed statement Wednesday.

Domestic sales advanced 2.7 percent to 43,172 vehicles in December compared with the previous month, AvtoVAZ said. The company also exported 56,010 of its Lada-brand vehicles in 2011, including 6,175 in December, according to the statement. Sollers, a Russian carmaker that works with Ford Motor, increased sales of cars and light commercial vehicles by about 25 percent last year.

The company sold 115,800 cars in 2011 compared with 93,000 in the previous 12-month period, the Moscow-based automaker, which produces SsangYong and Fiats in Russia, said in an e-mailed statement Wednesday. Sales advanced last year even after the state ended a rebate program that boosted demand, chief executive Vadim Shvetsov said in the statement.

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