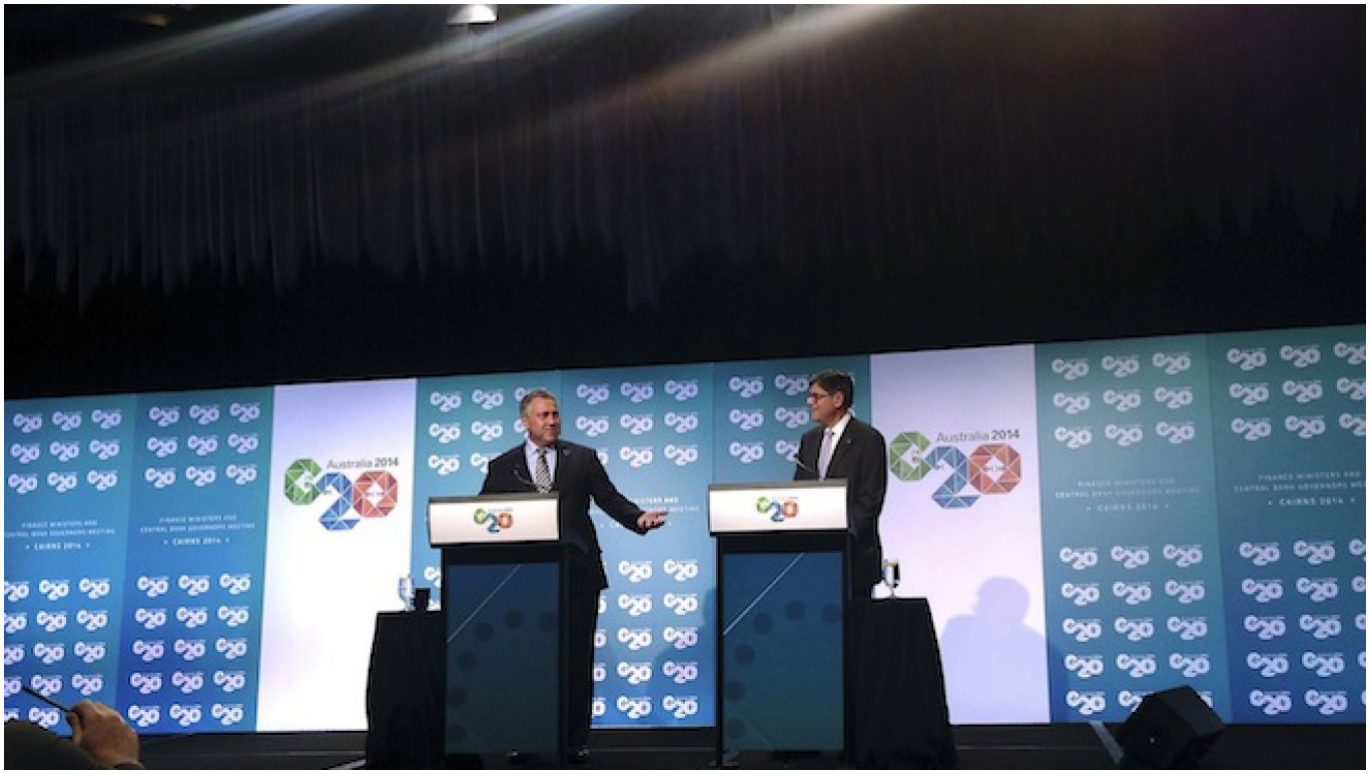
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Australian Treasurer Wants Putin to Attend G20 Summit

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U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew (R) stands with his Australian counterpart Joe Hockey during a media conference at the start of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in the northern Australian city of Cairns.

Despite the ongoing political events in Ukraine, the Group of Twenty leading industrial nations will back Russia's continued participation in the economic forum, Australia's chief treasurer said Friday.

Joe Hockey, speaking ahead of this weekend's summit of G20 finance ministers in the Australian city of Cairns, said member countries did not want to shut the door on Russia and that Russian President Vladimir Putin would be invited to participate in a G20 leaders meeting in Brisbane in November, TASS news agency reported.

"G20 is an economic forum, not a political forum," Hockey said when asked Friday if Australia would try to block Russia's participation in the Brisbane conference, TASS reported.

Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop earlier this month attempted to rally members

against Putin's participation in the Brisbane summit, news reports said.

In July, 38 Australian nationals were killed when a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet crashed over separatist-held territory in Ukraine. Western nations have accused the rebels of downing the aircraft with weapons obtained from Russia — a charge the Kremlin has denied.

Many of the G20 nations have slapped sanctions on Russia over what they say is Moscow's interference in the Ukraine conflict. In June, the other seven countries in the G8 boycotted a summit due to be held in the Russian city of Sochi in protest at Russia's annexation of Ukraine. The other nations met in Brussels instead.

Leading the Russian delegation in Cairns this weekend will be Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak, TASS reported.

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