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Iran President Rouhani Offers Help to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani at the welcoming ceremony during a summit of Caspian Sea regional leaders in the city of Astrakhan, Sept. 29.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani criticized Western sanctions against Moscow as "the wrong tool" Monday and said his country was ready to provide Russia with any assistance it might require.

"There are different ways of taking countermeasures," Rouhani told state-run television channel Rossia-24. "You can strengthen relations between neighbors, and in the current circumstances, we are ready to provide assistance of any kind to the people and government of Russia."

Rouhani announced during last week's United Nations General Assembly that Iran and Russia were discussing nuclear energy projects. In early August, the countries signed a memorandum of understanding on increasing economic and trade ties in a number of areas, including

the energy sector.

Rouhani was in the southern Russian city of Astrakhan on Monday to take part in the Caspian Sea Summit, along with President Vladimir Putin and the leaders of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. The five littoral states were to conduct negotiations on the legal status of the sea and its vast natural resources.

Iran and the Soviet Union signed treaties on the status of the Caspian Sea in 1921 and 1940, legal documents that remain valid to this day. Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan — whose borders emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union — have not considered themselves bound by these agreements.

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