

Plenty of Trade Disputes, But No Signs Russia Might Leave WTO

By [The Moscow Times](#)

March 24, 2015



World Trade Organization (WTO) Director-General Roberto Azevedo reacts during a news conference in Brazil.

Russia shows no signs of wanting to leave the World Trade Organization, WTO chief Roberto Azevedo said Tuesday, despite tensions with the West over the Ukraine crisis and disputes with other member states.

Some Russian parliamentarians have called for their country to pull out of the WTO less than three years after it acceded because, they say, membership is damaging Russia's economy.

But Azevedo said during a visit to Latvia that he had never heard of any moves by Russia to leave.

"Never, neither officially nor unofficially or any other way," he told a news briefing. "Russia has been a party to disputes in the WTO and I think every single member of the WTO including

Russia knew that would be the case."

"Russia is a big economy, it is going to be a very well-monitored economy because of its size, because of its importance, because of its relevance," he added. "And it is inevitable that big players will be at one point in time challenged in the WTO dispute settlement mechanism."

The European Union and the United States have imposed economic sanctions on Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis, although Moscow denies sending weapons and troops to support separatists fighting government forces in eastern Ukraine.

In response, Moscow has banned food imports from Europe.

The EU said last month it was escalating a dispute with Russia at the WTO over what it said were excessive import duties on paper products, refrigerators and palm oil.

The challenge was the latest in a series of WTO disputes with Moscow, the EU's third-biggest trading partner, since Russia joined the body in 2012.

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