

Kudrin Sees WTO Deal in 2-4 Months

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, at left in this file photograph, indicated Friday that Russia would likely become a WTO member in 2011. **S. Porter**

YALTA, Ukraine — Russia has resolved all outstanding issues with the United States over its 17-year-old World Trade Organization entry bid and could well join the WTO next year, Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin said Friday.

"I can say that the United States has removed all the questions regarding Russia joining the WTO," Kudrin said, adding that Russia's accession to the global-trade rules body should be agreed upon within four months at most and that the actual accession procedure could take six to 12 months after that, indicating Russia would likely become a WTO member in 2011.

On Friday, U.S. President Barack Obama had a telephone conversation with his counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, and confirmed that Russia has taken "significant steps" toward joining the World Trade Organization, the White House said.

"The Russian government has taken and continues to take significant steps to meet bilateral

commitments and to accelerating multilateral negotiations on Russia's WTO accession," the White House said in a statement.

The White House cited the passage of legislation, including changes to laws governing intellectual property rights, as helping Russia's case. "President Obama pledged to support Russia's efforts to complete remaining steps in multilateral negotiations so that Russia could join the WTO as soon as possible," the statement said.

During their meeting in Washington on June 24, the two presidents set Sept. 30 as the deadline for Russian and U.S. negotiators to resolve outstanding bilateral issues that would ease Russia's entry into the WTO. Kudrin said the United States and Russia had met that deadline.

"Yesterday we succeeded in doing this," Kudrin said at a conference in Yalta. "Now the main burden and completion of work shifts to the working group in Geneva." Getting Russia into the WTO is a major goal of the "reset" in U.S.-Russian ties that Obama and Medvedev have pursued.

U.S. officials said last month that there was good momentum toward membership for Russia, the largest economy outside the 153-nation group. But Moscow has sent mixed signals to the WTO, clouding its bid with handouts and protectionist measures designed to revive Russian industry.

The leaders also discussed their interest in getting legislative approval in both of their countries of the New START treaty before the end of the year and "their continued concern for Iran's defiance of its international obligations." Also discussed was the upcoming referendum in Sudan on the independence of its oil-producing south.

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