

Georgia Slams Lavrov Comment

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze has sharply criticized a recent statement made by his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, who said Russia could join the World Trade Organization without Tbilisi's consent, as the two countries discuss the matter in Switzerland.

"Threats made by Russia from afar that it could enter the organization without Georgia's consent are a pure bluff and blackmail," Vashadze told journalists on Thursday, adding that any country's plans to become a WTO member must be approved by all of the organization's member states.

Georgia, however, does not seek to block Russia's accession to the WTO, the minister said.

"Blocking Russia's entry into the WTO is not the goal of our participation in talks in Bern and Zurich, where the second round is taking place. We want to work together with Russia and the Swiss side to find a way out of this judicial absurdity, which was created by the Russian Federation's decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent

states," he said.

Georgia has not raised any political or military issues at these talks, where only procedures and rules envisioned by the organization's charter have been discussed, Vashadze said.

"Georgia should have the possibility to control its borders and its customs terminals," he said.

Tbilisi is ready to reach an agreement with Moscow, but the Russian authorities will have to heed the conditions put forward by Georgia, he said.

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