

Kremlin Won't Assume Some WTO Commitments

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will not have to assume many of the commitments to liberalize trade that are approved during the Doha round of World Trade Organization talks, the government's top trade negotiator said Wednesday, Interfax reported.

"Russia would like to see [the Doha round] wrap up as quickly as possible if only for pragmatic reasons," said Maxim Medvedkov, head of trade negotiations at the Economic Development Ministry.

"As a recently acceded member, we will not assume many of the Doha round's commitments to liberalize access to markets for goods and services, but we will be able to take advantage of the obligations of other countries," he said.

Medvedkov said subjects like further reducing import tariffs, broadening access to the services market and scaling down commitments to support agriculture would be discussed

during the Doha round.

The Doha round and campaign against protectionism will be among the themes of Russia's G20 presidency, "and we are drafting proposals on those now," Medvedkov said.

He said the situation in the context of the Doha round was "not straightforward right now."

"The negotiations are about secondary issues," he said. "I think there are several reasons for this. Many experts think the main one is that those who initiated the round set the bar too high. Many WTO members are clearly not ready for this."

"Countries that have always been regarded as emerging economies but have in the past decade been able to give many developed countries a head start in terms of the pace and quality of economic development are refusing to abandon their traditional preferences," he said. "And

countries that have always been considered developed want a leveling of entitlements and obligations."

A solution will be found sooner or later because there is no serious alternative to the WTO as a regulator of international trade, Medvedkov said.

"As far as Russia is concerned, our position will probably be determined with respect to each issue individually," he said. "In some respects, it will be to our benefit to consolidate with the emerging countries, and in others with the developed ones."

He also said Russia had obtained permission from the WTO General Council not to comply with WTO standards regarding trade in uncut diamonds.

"There's a special system for controlling trade in uncut diamonds," he said. "Validation is needed to prove that these are not blood diamonds and have been mined legally. But the WTO does not distinguish between legal and illegal."

This is a technical procedure, but all WTO countries that trade diamonds ought to receive this permission, he said.

Medvedkov went on to say that official WTO complaints against Russia had been made on four issues: the auto recycling fee, ad valorem and specific import duties, the ban on meat imports from the United States and the ban on imports of live animals from the European Union.

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