

S. Ossetia, Abkhazia to apply for CIS, CSTO membership and unify with Russia

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Abkhazia and South Ossetia plan to apply for membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), Abkhazian President Sergei Bagapsh said.

"Prospects are very good. We will apply for membership in these organizations and hope for a positive decision," Bagapsh told a press conference at Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

"I think our membership in the CIS and the CSTO, and especially in the Russia-Belarus Union State, is what we all need," he said.

South Ossetian President Eduard Kokoity said, "This is another stage in the development of our states. We will strengthen these relations, but this will take time."

Asked whether South Ossetia would join Russia, Kokoity said South Ossetia planned to join Russia by way of integration.

"South Ossetia intends to join Russia. South and North Ossetia are a part of Russia. We have never made a secret out of this," Kokoity said.

At the same time, he noted, "We will not give up our independence."

"What happened today vividly demonstrates Russia's determination to strengthen relations. Russia has no intention to annex other territories as others do," he said.

"We will build such relations with Moscow that will facilitate the integration of our peoples through different forms of integration, such as the removal of the border, and other forms," Kokoity said.

"We are very grateful to the Russian people," the South Ossetian president said.

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