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**☐☐ ARE OPEN': RUSSIA-LED BLOC MEMBERS IN FAVOR OF UZBEKISTAN'S RETURN, SAYS DIPLOMAT**

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TASS (20 September 2021)

Member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) would be in favor of Tashkent's return if it desired to do so, Russias Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said on Monday.

"In 2012, Uzbekistan suspended its participation in the CSTO. Nevertheless, we are open. If Uzbekistan shows any interest, then all countries would welcome such an intention," he said.

Uzbekistan was among the CSTOs founding countries in 1992. In June 2012, Tashkent suspended its membership. The Moscow-led blocs charter does not allow for the possibility of any unilateral withdrawal, and the suspension of participation in the CSTOs activities is possible only by a decision of the Collective Security Council. Officially, Tashkent did not explain its reasons for making such a decision.

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