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Fw: Russia eyes regional role, US ties at APEC summit (Reuters)

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Subject: Russia eyes regional role, US ties at APEC summit (Reuters)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Exploiting its huge geographical reach, Russia will try to build energy and investment ties with Asia and forge better relations with the United States at a weekend summit of countries on the Pacific Rim.

Top of President Dmitry Medvedev's agenda is a meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama, who hosts the gathering of leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group in Hawaii.

Medvedev and Obama have made headway in mending ties strained by Russia's 2008 war with Georgia and signed a nuclear arms control pact in April 2010.

But persisting disputes and presidential elections next year in both countries undermine the chances of progress in the "reset" of Russia-U.S. relations before Medvedev makes way for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to return as president.

Kremlin economic adviser Arkady Dvorkovich suggested there was still wariness on both sides of the former Cold War divide.

"The reset has already happened at the highest political level, but not in the heads of everyone," Dvorkovich said.

He said Russia was getting negative signals from the U.S. Congress, where Obama's Republican opponents accuse him of not being tough enough on Russia, and indicated there was similar sentiment about the United States in Russia's parliament.

The two presidents are likely to welcome a hard-won deal sealed this week by Russia and Georgia that opened the way for Russia to join the World Trade Organization.

But their meeting will be overshadowed by disagreement over U.S. plans for a European missile shield, which Russia says could threaten its security, and by differences over Arab world unrest from Libya to Syria.

Russia and China, which is also attending the summit, vetoed a U.S.-backed Security Council resolution last month condemning Syria's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.

The two leaders could also disagree on Iran after a report by the United Nations' nuclear energy watchdog

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deepened Western suspicions that Tehran is trying to develop atomic weapons. Russia opposes new sanctions on Iran.

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