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## Vietnam Needs 2 Years Before It Can Join WTO: Former Head

### DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

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HANOI (AP)--The former head of the World Trade Organization says Vietnam has much work ahead to join the global trade group, estimating it may take two more years before the communist country can accede.

Vietnam has stressed it wants to join the WTO by the end of this year, but it must first negotiate bilateral deals with all current members.

"It is possible, but it's going to be very difficult," said Mike Moore, WTO director general from 1999-2002, said during a visit Monday to Hanoi. "Your government wants to do the deal; you've negotiated 10 countries. You've only got another 130 to negotiate with - it's very hard."


Moore, from New Zealand, said it's more likely that Vietnam will gain access in the next two years. He said he watched 20 countries join the organization during his tenure and that each new member makes it more difficult for others to be admitted to the group.

"Countries will say, 'Why should Vietnam get a better deal than China?'" he said. "So every time you get a new member, there are new conditions. It becomes harder."

Despite the struggles of entering, Moore said the benefits of joining the WTO are enormous. He said one of Vietnam's biggest challenges after acceding will be wrangling with intellectual property rights issues. Everything from pirated software and DVDs to books are readily available on Vietnam's streets.

"You would want to join, I would think, to give you the protection of a rules-based system with binding disputes mechanisms so that you don't do a regional bilateral deal when later somebody changes the rules on you," he said.

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Vietnam is currently undergoing major economic and legal reforms to conform with WTO standards. It has already reach a bilateral deal with the 25-member European Union, but must still negotiate with heavyweights such as Japan, the United States and China.

Moore is in Vietnam for a week, meeting with high-ranking government officials and promoting cooperation with a New Zealand university, AUT.

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