

# Russia to grant \$150 mln in aid to Abkhazia, South Ossetia

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Russia will provide 2.36 billion rubles (\$70 million) in financial assistance to Abkhazia and 2.8 billion rubles (\$80 million) to South Ossetia from the federal budget, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

Russia recognized the former Georgian republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states on August 26, 2008, two weeks after the end of a five-day war with Georgia. Fighting began when Georgian forces attacked South Ossetia in a bid to bring it back under central control.

It said agreements between the finance ministries of Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the provision of financial assistance for the republics' socio-economic development would be signed on Tuesday.

The agreements will be based on the treaties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance that Russia and the two Caucasus republics signed in Moscow on September 18, 2008.

The Russian ministry said that despite the overall cuts that had affected the federal budget, the volume of financial assistance to the republics in 2009 would remain as originally planned.

In addition, South Ossetia will be granted 8.5 billion rubles (\$245 million) for reconstruction of housing, social amenities and utilities damaged as a result of the August 2008 war.

Nicaragua has so far been the only other country to follow Russia in recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

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