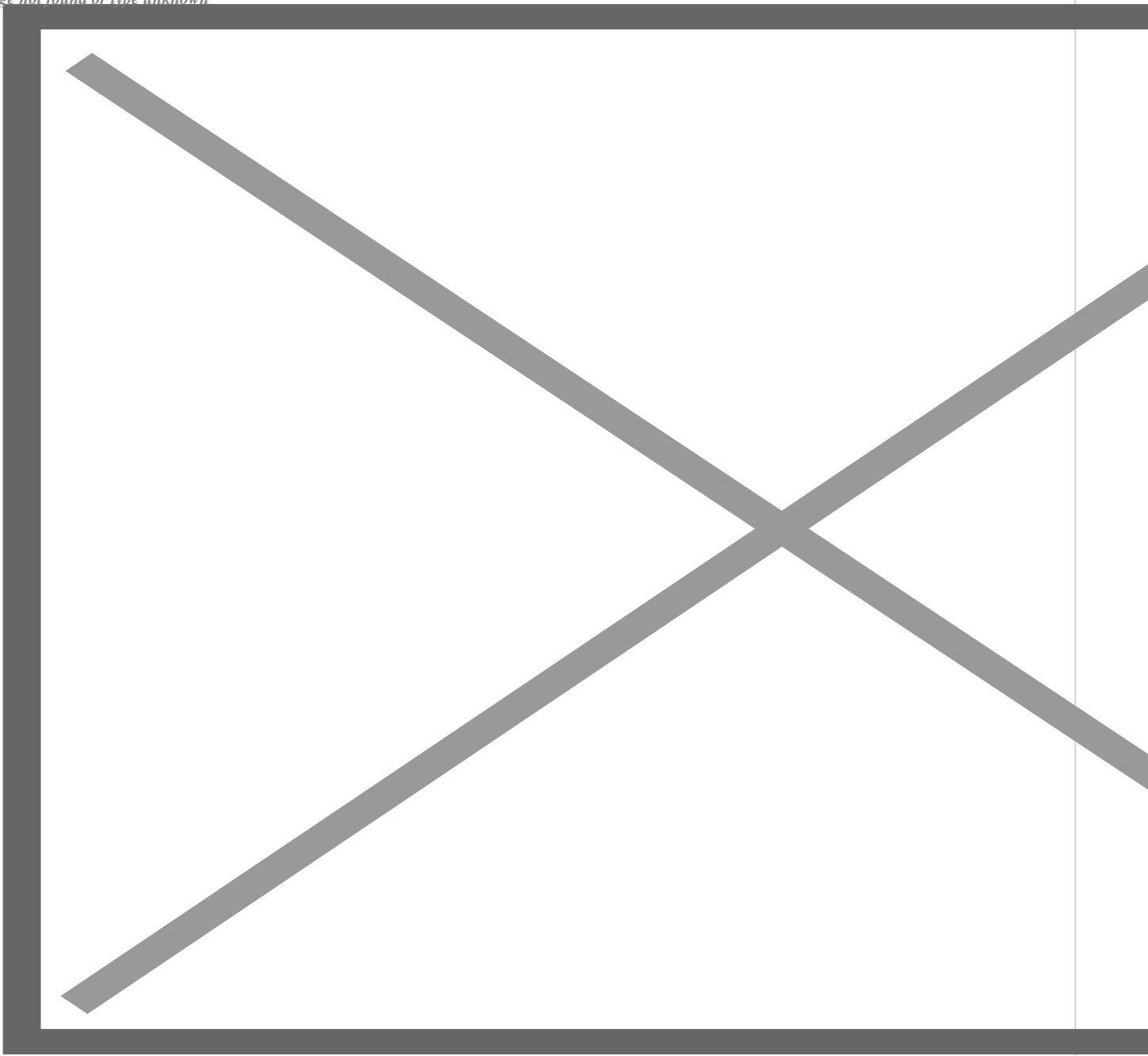


Agreement on Colombia radiates hope

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By Roberto Morejón

In Havana, where definitive agreements were reached in 2016 between the previous government and the insurgent Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, another positive step was taken when the current authorities and the rebel National Liberation Army agreed on a ceasefire for six months.

Although there is still time for discussion between representatives of Gustavo Petro's government and the ELN, observers agree in describing the agreement reached in the Cuban capital as historic.

For Petro himself, in an expression of optimism, the insurgent group is placed in different circumstances and in this way, he emphasized, contributes to the promise that in May 2025 the war in Colombia will cease completely.

These are big words and an aspiration of many inhabitants of that South American country, scene of violence for decades.

It is not by chance that the agreement reached in Havana awakened expectations in Colombia, where, however, right-wing groups and economic elites are expected to present their considerations, after overcoming the initial surprise of the announcement.

Nevertheless, on the table is already ready the statement of the bilateral cease-fire for a preliminary period of 180 days, the most precise movement registered so far during the dialogue of the mentioned parties, structured in three cycles.

As was logical, guerrillas and government envoys indicated their desire for the majority support of Colombian society.

As part of that society, peasants, community dwellers and other citizens who have ventured into violence should be among the first to harbor hopes for a cease-fire agreement.

They still await, as does the current Colombian government, the establishment of solid commitments in the search for a lasting peace, so elusive, and the construction of a scenario conducive to justice.

After the achievement reported in Havana, there will be increased interest in the actors in the dialogue defining further progress during the fourth cycle in Venezuela.

In the meantime, it is appropriate to point out that Cuba was pleased to facilitate, with its organization, impartiality and discretion, the good progress of part of the dialogue between the government and the ELN.

And it is also encouraging that President Petro and the insurgents objected and consequently urged the elimination of the classification of Cuba, by the United States, as a country sponsoring terrorism.

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