

New cycle of Colombia's peace talks opens in Venezuela

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By María Josefina Arce.

In the fourth cycle of peace talks, the government of President Gustavo Petro and the insurgent National Liberation Army of Colombia return to Venezuela, a country where the dialogue was resumed, after four years paralyzed by the previous administration, headed by the now former president Iván Duque.

In Caracas, the Venezuelan capital, the Dialogue Table was reinstalled and the first round took place from November to December last year, which opened the way in the search for and materialization of peace.

Substantial progress has been made in this new stage, which will take place in the midst of a cease-fire between both parties, which came into effect on August 3.

This temporary and renewable ceasefire, which was one of the main agreements of the third round of negotiations held from May to June in Havana, Cuba, guarantor of the peace process, will be in effect for 180 days.

The UN Mission in Colombia, whose mandate was extended at the request of Petro's government, will closely monitor the observance by both parties of the ceasefire, a desire of the whole country and especially of the communities affected by the armed conflict.

Recall that the UN Mission was established following the peace agreement signed in 2016 in Havana between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the once guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army.

The Catholic Church, guarantor countries and social actors will also verify that both the government and the guerrilla group comply with what was agreed.

In the Cuban capital, progress was also made in another important aspect, the participation of all citizens in the current process to move towards a true and total peace in the South American territory.

To this end, the National Participation Committee was officially constituted at the beginning of this month, a special and transitory instance articulated to the Dialogue Table.

This agreement was welcomed by civil society, which stressed the importance of listening to all Colombians, from workers, students and indigenous peoples to the prison population.

It is with great commitment that we arrive at this new cycle of peace talks. Senator Iván Cepeda, from the executive negotiating team, said that they hope to return to Bogotá with new agreements that will develop this vital process.

In its first year in office, Petro's government has taken firm steps to make total peace a reality, and on that path has assured that they will continue negotiating to put an end to the armed conflict.

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