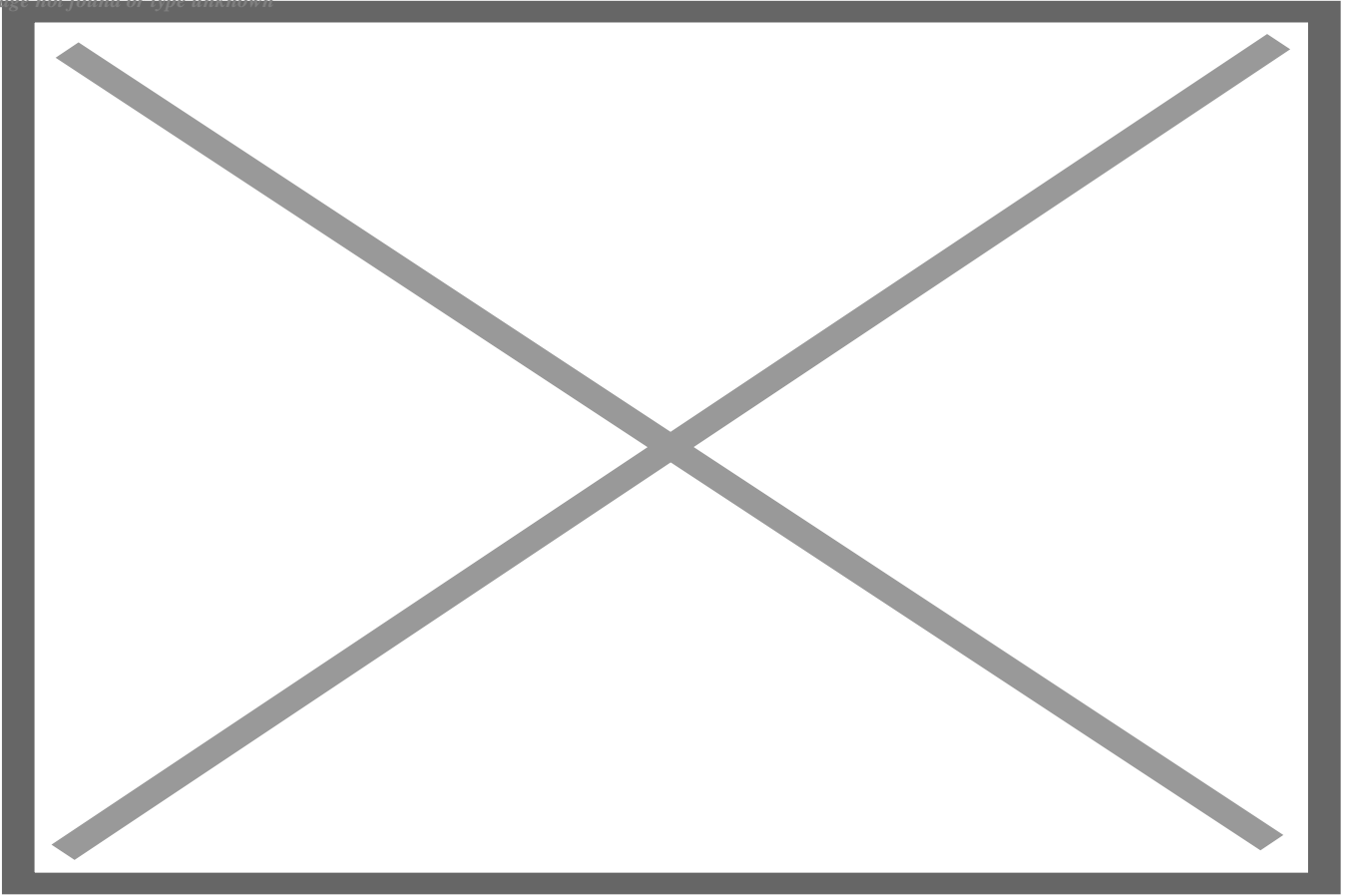


Advances in the search for total peace in Colombia

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By María Josefina Arce

Encouraging advances have been registered in recent days in the search for total peace in Colombia, a process not exempt of difficulties as it is necessary to bring positions closer, build trust between the parties involved in the talks and favor the participation of the whole society.

The dialogue between the government of President Gustavo Petro and the National Liberation Army, after some disagreements, is progressing well. The fourth cycle has just concluded in Caracas, the Venezuelan capital, where the talks began in November last year.

The main agreement has been the creation of so-called humanitarian zones, where the armed conflict has

hit communities the hardest. In these areas, not only humanitarian actions will be carried out, but also development projects will be implemented for the benefit of their inhabitants.

The places chosen are in the departments of Valle del Cauca, Bolívar and Antioquia, but if necessary, the negotiators said, new zones may be defined.

The results so far speak of the interest and seriousness of both parties to continue advancing on the road to total peace. In fact, in a communiqué, the guarantor and accompanying countries of the process expressed their satisfaction with the respectful and constructive atmosphere prevailing.

The fourth cycle, which began last month, was reached after two important agreements were reached in Havana: a bilateral, national and temporary cease-fire and the participation of society in the construction of peace, in which, the authorities have emphasized, all Colombians must participate.

In addition to this excellent result, there is another piece of good news: a dialogue table will be set up between the government and former guerrillas of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia). This agreement was reached after two days of negotiations in the town of Suarez, in the department of Cauca.

It should be recalled that these groups did not adhere to the peace agreement signed in Havana in 2016 between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the insurgent organization.

On the coming 17th, a new meeting will take place to finalize details on the date and place where the dialogue table will be installed, which, as specified, will have the presence of the international community as guarantors and accompaniers.

The coordinator of the government delegation, Camilo Gonzalez, said that this is positive news that shows that there is a will that is combining to put an end to the violence.

Petro's government has been working tirelessly, overcoming obstacles and criticisms in the face of its goodwill gestures to build a new country and heal the wounds of a society bled by the long armed conflict.

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