

Second Rebel Group Engaged in Peace Talks with Colombian Government



Bogotá, October 20 (RHC-EFE) -- The National Liberation Army, or the ELN, Colombia's second-largest guerrilla group, said it had meetings in recent months with President Juan Manuel Santos's administration aimed at starting peace talks with the government.

ELN leader Nicolas Rodriguez Bautista said in a video posted on the rebel group's Web site that additional meetings were held following the release of a joint statement on June 10th about "exploratory meetings."

"Following that announcement, we have continued developing bilateral activities that have allowed us to discuss other elements of the agenda that the country will know at a specific time," the rebel leader said.

The two sides said in the June 10th statement that they were discussing the inclusion of at least two points - the "participation of society and the issue of victims" - on the negotiating agenda.

There is now agreement on including these two points on the agenda, Rodriguez Bautista said.

"It has been an important process and complicated at the same time, the development of the agenda and reaching agreement on it. It's not easy, it is necessary to be aware that we are dealing with more than 50 years of conflict and we are having a dialogue of real enemies," the rebel leader said.

Rodriquez Bautista said that the ELN is willing to start a peace process similar to the one the government has been engaged in with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, the country's largest insurgent group.

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