

Cuba to host a new round of peace talks for Colombia

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By María Josefina Arce

Cuba will begin 2024 with an important responsibility. It will once again host a new cycle of peace talks between the government of President Gustavo Petro and the insurgent ELN, Colombia's National Liberation Army.

The sixth round of the talks will take place in Havana from January 22. According to a joint communiqué issued in Mexico, where the fifth stage took place, this meeting in the Cuban capital will facilitate the Inter-Cycle Contact Point of the Dialogue Table.

Already between May and June of this year, the Cuban capital was the scene of the Third Cycle, during which transcendental agreements were signed regarding the participation of the entire Colombian society in the construction of the total peace promoted by President Petro.

An agreement was also signed for a bilateral and national cease-fire for 180 days, which came into effect at the beginning of August and should be extended until the end of January.

The signing of these important agreements in Havana was presided over by the Colombian president and his Cuban counterpart, Miguel Díaz Canel.

The return of the talks to Cuban territory is a recognition of the seriousness and commitment of Cuba as a guarantor of the peace process in Colombia.

In fact, both sides have stressed that Cuba has been indispensable in the search for peace between the Colombian government and the ELN. Not from now, they have pointed out, but from long ago.

Havana previously hosted these contacts with the ELN until 2018 when the government of then President Iván Duque decided to break off the dialogue, following an action by the insurgent group.

Cuba's full compliance with the protocols established in the event of a breakdown in negotiations led the United States to include it again in its unilateral and arbitrary list of countries allegedly sponsoring terrorism.

The UN has also emphasized that Cuba, like few other countries, has done much for peace in Colombia. Let's remember that the Antillean nation also hosted the dialogue between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the once guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, which culminated in the signing of a historic Peace Agreement.

Now Cuba will once again fulfill its role as guarantor of the peace process in Colombia with total responsibility, seriousness and neutrality, a modest contribution to achieve reconciliation among Colombians.

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