

Cuba to host talks between Colombian government and ELN rebels



Bogota, May 7 (RHC)-- The Colombian government and the National Liberation Army have announced that Havana will serve as the location for their next round of talks. The decision was announced by way of a joint statement issued over the weekend. The negotiations could begin as early as this week, with a ceasefire as the main topic of discussion, the statement added.

“After jointly examining the options to restart talks as soon as possible, we have decided to continue the fifth cycle of talks in the city of Havana, Cuba,” the two sides said in a joint statement.

In March, the government and ELN announced that they were discussing the possibility of agreeing on a new bilateral ceasefire. However, Ecuadorean President Lenín Moreno announced in mid-April that his country would no longer serve as the guarantor and host for the peace talks between the two parties.

Ecuador’s decision came after two Ecuadorean journalists and their driver were killed by an armed group of dissidents.

ELN chief negotiator Pablo Beltran told teleSUR English that the ELN was looking forward to continuing the peace dialogues. "We hope that in the time remaining in negotiations we can arrive at a new truce that must be better than the last one... Colombia can count on us that we will maintain the effort to find a political solution."

Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Norway, and Venezuela are the five remaining guarantor countries for the ELN negotiations.

Colombia's protracted conflict between the government, rebel groups, paramilitaries and criminal gangs has killed at least 220,000 people and displaced millions.

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