

Colombian Peace Talks to Resume May 12th



Havana, May 6 (RHC) – The peace negotiations between the Colombian government and leftist FARC rebel group will resume on May 12th, following positive developments in the latest round of talks last week.

The two sides issued a joint statement saying they have advanced toward a partial accord on eradicating illegal drug crops, but stopped short of signing a deal. They pledged to renew talks on May 12 after a brief recess.

"We are making significant progress. ... It's a good environment. I would say it couldn't be better," guerrilla leader Ivan Marquez told reporters. "At some point we will have news relating to this matter of illicit drugs."

Peace negotiators have been meeting in Havana since November 2012 in an attempt to reach a comprehensive agreement over a conflict that has killed more than 200,000 people over 50 years.

Any progress toward a peace agreement could provide a boost to center-right President, Juan Manuel Santos, already the front-runner, as he seeks re-election on May 25th.

Government representatives declined to speak to reporters.

The two sides are working on a plan to eradicate illicit drug cultivation through crop substitution. Though Colombia imports most of the coca leaf used to produce cocaine, the South American country also grows marijuana and poppy, the raw ingredient for heroin.

But that is just one of three points on the agenda regarding drug trafficking. They will also seek a deal on prevention of drug use and a solution to the production and sale of narcotics.

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