

UN Welcomes Peace Talks with Colombian ELN Rebel Group



Bogotá, June 11 (NNN-RHC) -- The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Colombia, Fabrizio Hochschild, welcomed a peace initiative announced jointly by the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group.

The UN official said the announcement represents an important step toward ending the five-decade-long armed conflict in Colombia, but also warned that the peace process could take some time.

The government and the ELN, Colombia's second-largest guerrilla group, made the joint public statement early Tuesday, posting on the official website of Colombia's presidency.

The agenda will include such issues as reparations for victims of the armed conflict and the rebels' participation in society once they have disarmed. Other topics are yet to be agreed, the statement added.

The document, addressed to Colombians and the international community, expresses the willingness of both sides to continue talking, and welcomes the support of Venezuela, Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Ecuador and Norway for any potential peace process.

It also calls on Colombians to join in the effort to end the conflict in the Andean country, the oldest on the continent.

The government is currently also in peace talks with the country's largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Cuba.

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