Afghan Govt Expecting Direct Talks with Taliban in Two Weeks

KABUL - Sibghatullah Ahmadi, Spokesman of Afghanistan’s government, said on Sunday that Afghanistan is very close to peace. "This comes as U.S. and Taliban representatives are negotiating behind closed doors since Saturday and the group has always rejected to hold talks with President Ashraf Ghani’s government," he said.

KARUL - United Nations (UN) Special Representative for Afghanistan Tallam’s Yamamoto has said that both peace process and upcoming presidential elections remained top priorities for the UN, according to a statement on Sunday. "Regarding efforts related to the upcoming presidential elections and the work to create an initial peace framework in Afghanistan, I wish to reiterate that both processes are top priorities for the UN," the statement quoted him as saying.

"Considering the various media reports speculating about the continuation of the United Nations on these two fundamental issues, let me clarify: Neither the process should be harmed or held back by the other; both processes must move forward with the full-time and commitment of all stakeholders. While there are clear links between these critical processes, as they both will substantively affect Afghanistan’s future, the United Nations will continue to do all in both areas," it said.

Sources close to the Taliban said that the negotiations are ongoing over the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and a Taliban guarantee that Afghanistan will not be used by terrorists against the U.S. and its allies. "I think the two sides are discussing the previous agenda. Sir Mohammad Ahsan Stanikzai is leading the Taliban team and the negotiations are expected to have a positive result," said Sayed Ali-Agha Afsa, a former Taliban official.

However, the U.S. negotiating team is expected to focus on a prisoner exchange and the launch of an intra-Afghan dialogue. At the same time, the head of the UN, said on P6(4).

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