No Decision Yet on Moscow Talks: MoFA

KABUL - The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has urged the electoral authorities to safeguard the integrity and transparency of the electoral process, especially concerning vote counting, as well as the tabulation and announcement of results, according to a statement on Saturday.

Voting in parliamentary elections largely completed following yesterday's presidential vote in Kandahar, the UN Mission also encouraged the electoral authorities to act expeditiously in announcing the electoral timeline for presidential elections, scheduled to take place 20 April 2019.

In view of the challenging security environment in which the elections took place, the UN continued, "We urge all concerned parties to cooperate with the electoral authorities to ensure that the elections are fair, free and transparent, in accordance with the law and international standards, and that the results are credible and acceptable to the Afghan people."

UNAMA Urges Electoral Authorities to Safeguard Elections Integrity, Transparency

KABUL - The Afghan government is yet to take a decision on whether to participate in the planned Moscow talks on peace in the country, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said on Sunday.

MoFA spokesman Suhail Ahmadzai said discussions about holding the talks were ongoing but the Afghan government had kept its position that no breakthrough will emerge out of any talks unless the Taliban release Afghans-held and Afghan citizens held by the Taliban.

According to Ahmadzai, Kabul and Moscow are still debating the issue of holding talks and until now, no decision has been made.

"Discussions are still going on about the prospects of a Moscow meeting, we are still holding discussions about it with the Russian side about how to conduct the meeting," said Ahmadzai.

A former US diplomat and an expert on Afghanistan affairs, Barnett Rubin, said talks were needed because of the "grim situation" in the country.

"We are facing a grim situation in Afghanistan and there is a need for talks. These are the only option to end the crisis in the country," he said.

UNAMA's statement was later echoed by Afghan media outlets, which also expressed support for the Moscow talks.

Rubin, who attended the seventh Herat Security Dialogue in Herat on Saturday, told TOLOnews that on a military level, the Taliban could not negotiate directly with India.

"In any case, if the Taliban want to negotiate, they have to respond to the will of the international community," he said.

"We believe that the Taliban should respond to the international community's demand for talks. This is a necessary step for the Afghan peace process."