
KABUL SEES QATAR DIALOGUE AS A PROGRESS IN PEACE PROCESS

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Almost 50 delegates from Afghanistan and 17 representatives of the Taliban have attended a two-day intra-Afghan dialogue conference in Doha, co-hosted by Germany and Qatar, which kicked off on Sunday.

It can be evaluated as a progress [in the peace process] and an opportunity for those Afghans who are present there in the meeting to share their ideas with each other, President Ghani's spokesman Sediq Sediqqi told TOLONews.

It is not negotiation, it is a dialogue, said Matin Beg, head of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, who has attended the Doha conference.

The delegation from Kabul is a different delegation which will show to the Taliban [members] the changes in Afghanistan in the past eighteen years. We expect that the talks will result in official negotiations.

Sources said that the Taliban is ready for direct talks with the Afghan government if the United States provides a timetable for the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan.

The sources also said Norway has been added to the list of the countries which are interested to host official peace talks of Afghanistan.

The High Peace Council, meanwhile, stressed the need for direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

We hope that these talks will provide the ground for direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, a spokesman of the High Peace Council, Assadullah Zaeri, said.

Meanwhile, Germany's Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Markus Potzel, in his opening remarks in intra-Afghan dialogue conference in Doha on Sunday said that he appreciates Afghans for engaging in a constructive dialogue with each other because of all the suffering the people of Afghanistan have endured and are still enduring.

Gathered around the table today are some of the brightest minds representing a cross-section of Afghan society, he said.

He said that each delegate of the Doha conference has a unique opportunity and a unique responsibility to find ways of turning violent confrontation into a peaceful debate.

He said that Afghanistan wants and deserves peace, a peace that protects the rights of all Afghan citizens, especially women and minorities, and that leaves the region and the world more secure.

Together with Qatar, we have taken the initiative for this dialogue because we want to do our bit in paving the way for peace in Afghanistan, he said.

He appreciated the US efforts for peace and the US-Taliban talks over the past few months but said that the talks are important, but they cannot be enough. Dialogue has to turn into a meaningful negotiating process, Potzel said.

The German envoy said that Afghanistans future cannot be imposed from the outside, it can only be determined by Afghans themselves.

We understand that making peace wont be easy. Your country is at the crossroads of competing for regional and international interests. But outside factors can only result in conflict if Afghans are divided. When Afghans stand united the region will recognize that its interests are best served by a stable and peaceful neighbor, he said.

The Qatar dialogue conference will continue for two days and they are expected to issue a statement at the end of the event. The US-Taliban talks will resume on Tuesday, July 9.

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