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Annex 2.48

Cote d'Ivoire's rebel leader sets two conditions for transition

LOME, Oct 13, 2005 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- Cote d'Ivoire's rebel leader Guillaume Soro said Thursday that setting up an integrated staff for the two military forces and making Ivorian capital Yamoussoukro a "green city" secured by international forces are two preconditions for the peaceful transition of the country.

Speaking in neighboring Burkina Faso's capital Ougadougou, Soro proposed a joint staff for the two armies in war. "As long as the two armies keep fighting each other, it is difficult to achieve a disarmament," he was quoted by reports reaching here.

The second condition is that Yamoussoukro be transformed into a "green city" placed under the security control of international forces, he said.

Soro, leader of the rebel New Forces, also proposed that former head of state Henri Konan Bedie and former prime minister Alassane Dramane Ouattara settle down in Yamoussoukro to symbolize the reconciliation.

For him, starting from Oct. 30, Laurent Gbagbo will no longer be an elected president. He reaffirmed that he had rejected the proposal of the African Union (AU) that Gbagbo stay for up to one more year with a new government to try to fully implement the foundering peace deals and organize fair presidential elections.

Cote d'Ivoire has been divided in two since a 2002 civil war. Elections originally scheduled for Oct. 30 are believed to be delayed.

The Marcoussis peace accord signed in France in 2003 requires a disarmament of rebel forces and a sufficient political reform to allow full opposition participation in the national government.

The rebels and the government now accuse each other of failing to implement the deal, and appeal to different outside factors for support.

Burkina Faso was one leg of a tour that has taken Soro to Senegal, Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali and Ethiopia. "The objective of this tour is to explain the situation of my country to the African authorities and ask for their help," he said.

Xinhua

13 Oct 2005