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HIA satisfied with new round of peace parleys

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The Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), which resumed peace negotiations with government this week, expressed its satisfaction over a meeting with President Hamid Karzai. Qaribul Rahman Saeedi, the HIA political office spokesman in Europe and member of the party's negotiating team, said they met Karzai at the Presidential Palace. Issues concerning the proposed strategic agreement between Afghanistan and the US, a 15-article HIA reconciliation plan and proposals from the High Peace Council came under discussion at the meeting.

Saeedi said there was no major sticking point in the negotiations, but agreement on some points was still elusive. However, the HIA spokesman did not go into details. He claimed the High Peace Council hailed the party peace commission for evincing a keen interest in bringing peace to the country.

The peace council's response will be presented to the HIA executive body and its leader Gulbadin Hekmatyar before we decide on our future course of action. He added: It was neither the first nor last visit of our delegation to Kabul. We will come again to take forward the process of negotiations.

In addition to meeting Afghan officials, Saeedi said the delegation also held talks with representatives of the French embassy in Kabul. The meeting was requested by the French embassy, he said.

They had fruitful discussions with the new peace council chief, Salahuddin Rabbani, he continued. He is an honest and intelligent man. We are optimistic that he would play an important role in bringing peace to Afghanistan.

This time, we had good talks. We are happy with the outcome and upbeat about the future, he said. The delegation is expected to leave Kabul on Tuesday after receiving a response to their demands from the peace council.

Last month, the group -- the second largest after the Taliban -- said it was suspending talks with Washington and Kabul because they lacked a clear policy on reconciliation.