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Salvador, rebels sign agreement

By Gail Fitzer
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NEW YORK — The government of El Salvador and leftist rebels signed a breakthrough accord yesterday that is expected to lead to the end of the country's 11-year-old civil war.

"Representatives of the government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) have just signed a broad agreement on conditions and guarantees for the re-integration into society of members of the FMLN," said United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

"It is my firm expectation that this agreement will break the deadlock in the negotiations."

Ten days of U.N.-mediated talks ended a deadlock in negotiations between the government of Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani and the FMLN.

Negotiations are now expected to continue next month toward a permanent cease-fire.

"Efforts leading toward agreements on all pending substantive matters and a brief, dynamic cease-fire are to resume shortly," Mr. Perez de Cuellar said.

Alvaro de Soto, assistant secretary-general and the chief negotiator in the U.N. talks, said that while the agreement did not constitute a cease-fire in the civil war that has left 75,000 people dead, he believed

the major stumbling block in the negotiations had been overcome.

Both sides in the conflict are interested in achieving a cease-fire before Mr. Perez de Cuellar leaves office at the end of the year.

One of the most controversial elements of the agreement pertains to the "purification" of the Salvadoran armed forces, which have repeatedly been accused of human rights abuses.

Mr. De Soto said the two sides had "solved some fairly important problems that will have to then be spelled out in agreements to be negotiated" at a later date on the issue of the Salvadoran army.

The agreement also establishes criteria for future negotiations on reduction of the Salvadoran armed forces, the doctrine of the armed forces and the educational system and professional training of the U.S.-backed army, Mr. de Soto said.

He said the agreement also established an "agenda and certain criteria" regarding a new national civilian police force and the "incorporation of new personnel on a non-discriminatory basis." The FMLN, which dropped its initial demands to be incorporated in the armed forces, will be included in the new police force, rebel sources said.

The accord also spells out "certain goals and commitments" on specific economic and social issues and sets up an agenda and principles for the upcoming negotiations, Mr. de Soto said.