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Key talks to finalize multi-party get-together
by Michael Sanders

JOHANNESBURG, March 2 (AFP) - Seven major political players, including for the first time a rightwing party, were meeting Tuesday in Cape Town to ensure that a showpiece forum this weekend heralds the resumption of democracy talks.

The white minority government's top negotiator Roelf Meyer was in the talks with his African National Congress (ANC) counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), government and conference sources said.

Also present were three smaller parties from last year's Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) democracy talks, which stalled last May.

The seventh player, Meyer's spokesman Izak Retief said, was the small right-wing Afrikaner Volksunie (AVU), which broke away last August from the mainstream far right Conservative Party (CP).

Theuns Eloff, organiser of the two-day conference here starting Friday, said all 19 CODESA participants had been notified, as well as the AVU, the CP and the hardline black Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). So far only AZAPO has declined.

CP General Secretary Les Theron told AFP Tuesday the CP would attend, and the AVU, which was Tuesday presenting its plans for a white homeland to the government in Cape Town, is also likely to turn up.

That rightwing participation would give the planning conference the broader legitimacy that eluded CODESA.

The PAC's presence might hinge on its bilateral talks under way Tuesday in Gaborone with the Pretoria government on the PAC's guerrillas, who killed five white civilians late last year.

But a conference source said: "There are quite a few unresolved issues. The parties have committed themselves to coming, but my personal concern is that it will go ahead and nothing will be achieved, and it will be seen as counter-productive."

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