



## **AFRICA/SUDAN - The Church multiplies initiatives for the peaceful conduct of the referendum on 9 January**

Khartoum (Agenzia Fides) – Even the Catholic Church is mobilizing to ensure that the referendum on the independence of South Sudan occurs peacefully. Archbishop Paolino Lukudu Loro of Juba, announced the extension to 16 January of the “101 days of prayer”, promoted by the Episcopal Conference of Sudan, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services, which began on 21 September and that was to expire on 1 January (see Fides 22/9/2010). Bishop Caesar Mazzolari of Rumbek, in his New Year message, appealed to northern and southern Sudanese to accept the outcome of the vote with calmness.

Cardinal Charles Napier, Archbishop of Durban (South Africa), will lead a delegation to monitor the referendum. On the political front, the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, is on a visit to Juba, where he met with Salva Kiir, President of the administration of semi-autonomous south Sudan (and the future independent state, should the “yes” prevail in the independence referendum on 9 January). “Peace is our ultimate goal in our relations with our brethren of the South, even if they choose a different path than that of unity” said Bashir said in a speech on 1 January.

A high-level U.S. delegation led by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, will visit Sudan on 8 January. (LM)  
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