



## **AFRICA/CÔTE D'IVOIRE - Bishops condemn violence and call all to observe pacts**

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - "We condemn the violent deaths carried out in the name of the dignity of the human person dear to God. It is also in the name of respect for human life that we oppose the use of force, violence and every type of weapon to resolve the Ivorian post-electoral crisis," reads the declaration sent to Fides, issued at the close of the 91st Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Côte d'Ivoire, on 23 January in Bingerville. In recent days numerous people have been killed around the Country in clashes in ordered strikes or raids by para-military bands. The political crisis originated from the refusal of outgoing President Laurent Gbagbo to recognise the victory of Alassane Ouattara, in the second round of the presidential elections held on 28 November, risking the collapse of the Country into chaos and civil war. This is a risk that the Bishops denounce in the following terms: "That we may be spared another war, that will only increase the hardship and poverty and will increase the number of deaths."

"For this reason," continued the statement, "we commit ourselves to the words of the Servant of God, Pope Paul VI, in his Address given on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in 1976: "It is necessary before all else to provide Peace with other weapons - weapons different from those destined to kill and exterminate mankind. What is needed above all are moral weapons, those which give strength and prestige to international law - the weapon, in the first place, of the observance of pacts."

The Bishops further intend to provide clarity on various controversies involving several members of the Church: "We would also welcome the occasion to enlighten Christians and all people of good will about the false accusations against various members of the Ivorian Episcopal Conference. We want to reassure the People of God, national and international opinions, that no member of the Catholic hierarchy is involved in any act of corruption or is being held responsible for appropriating funds.

"We Bishops from the Côte d'Ivoire, invite the Catholic faithful and all people of good will to follow the path of seeking truth and justice. Finally, we invite all to not be disheartened but to persevere in prayer and in love of neighbour, to create a more united and fraternal Côte d'Ivoire," concludes the message.

The chairman of the African Union, the President of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, is in Côte d'Ivoire today, 25 January, to meet with Gbagbo and Ouattara. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 25/1/2011)