



## **ASIA/SINGAPORE-The Christians to the new President: it is urgent to stop human trafficking**

Singapore (Agenzia Fides) - Singapore is a hub for human traffickers. The fight against this alarming phenomenon must be a priority on the new President, Tony Tan's agenda, who was elected two weeks ago. This is what the Christian community in Singapore, about 16% of the population, asks. Speaking to Fides, Joan O'Reilly Fix, Director of Communications of the Diocese of Singapore, underlines: " the Christian community will continue to work with the new President on key issues such as how to preserve the harmony between different ethnic and religious components in a diverse and plural society; or guarantee the necessary attention to the marginalized, the sick and the elderly". Certainly, that of human trafficking is "a major concern for Singapore and the countries of the region". This is why the Bishops of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei have launched a program of awareness and action to counter the harmful effects of the phenomenon, noting that "this commitment is part of the social mission of the Church". The Christian community takes the phenomenon to the attention of President Tan as a "real emergency". All society is aware of how the trade of adults, women and children, as "the new slaves " flourishes. Civil society and human rights organizations in Southeast Asia, ask for greater commitment on behalf of the government and security forces in Singapore. They ask to tighten penalties as a deterrent to traffickers: today, according to the Penal Code in force, a smuggler who sells children for prostitution undergoes a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison but, according to a recent survey, very often they get away with it with a fine and a few weeks in prison. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/09/2011)