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ASIA/NEPAL - Civil Society: a power vacuum, there is a risk of violence and profiteering

Kathmandu (Agenzia Fides) - Uncertainty, lack of clarity and perspective, fear dominates the social and political climate in Kathmandu, shaken yesterday by protests outside the headquarters of the Constituent Assembly, where the people of Nepal expressed all their disappointment. The Constituent Assembly, in fact, did not reach an agreement and was not able to write a text for the new Constitution by May 27, last expiration date of the meeting. The critical point on which the agreement was not found was the possible federal structure of the state, that some political groups wanted it to be adjusted according to the ethnic group. This is why the Assembly, created in 2008, was dissolved and the President of Nepal Baburam Bhattarai called for new elections which will be held in six months. Meanwhile a state emergency was also declared, which allows the current government to remain in office until the new electoral response.
In this phase of instability civil society expresses its serious concern about the future. Mandira Sharma, a lawyer, a leader of the NGO "Advocacy Forum", which promotes the rule of law, democracy and human rights in Nepal, told Fides: "There is great uncertainty and there is a real risk of renewed violence outbursts. Although now the situation is calm in the country, the next move of political parties is expected. We fear that some groups can take advantage of the power vacuum to seek to impose itself by force." For this reason, she explains, "civil society holds high threshold of attention, but we also ask the international community to continue monitoring the situation in Nepal, to ensure a peaceful transition to a solid democracy."
In a statement sent to Fides, including the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide" defines the lack of agreement on the Constitution "a huge blow to the future of Nepal", because "the Constitution should have completed the transition from monarchy to a secular and democratic republic." Now, she adds, "it is up to politicians to work together in the national interest and recover people’s trust." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 29/5/2012)

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