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AMERICA/BRAZI - "Even today, the Amazon is considered as a colony": the voice of the Bishops against a model that does not consider the native population

Santarem (Agenzia Fides) - "One of the problems currently faced by the peoples of the Amazon is that of the major projects which, besides having a huge impact on the environment, generate profits for some and cause numerous negative social impacts for cities in which they are carried out": this is the main theme of the press conference held on July 3 by the Workshop" St. Pius X," as part of the X Meeting of Bishops of the Amazon, which takes place in Santarém-PA, Brazil. The speakers at the press conference were His Exc. Mgr Jesus Maria Berdonces, Bishop of the Prelature of Cameta, and President of the North Brazilian Region I; His Exc. Mgr. Moses Joao Pontelo, Bishop of Cruzerio do Sul and president of the North-West Region; His Exc. Mgr. Roque Paloschi, Bishop of Roraima, and Msgr. Raymond Possidonio, coordinator of the Pastoral of the Archdiocese of Belém and historian.
Mgr. Jesus Berdonces stressed that the Amazon is still considered today as a colony, where people come, take raw material, get richer, and then leave. "This is a capitalist model, adopted by the government in the region of the Amazon, which does not take into account the people who live there. To them people are just a detail that hinders development, " reads the note sent by the Episcopal Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) to Fides. But there is another model recommended by the Church, whose goal is the people who are in the Amazon: "The Church supports the promotion of family farming, argues that the profits of wealth (both mining and agriculture) should remain in Amazon, and that people should be involved. "Mgr. Roque Paloschi stressed the importance of knowing who is benefitting from the profits of these large projects, as well as having the blessing of the government, are funded with public money. He underlined that people do not have guarantees and their lands are almost always used for some arbitrarily "agribusiness" and by economic groups that arrive in the area. Mgr. Mosé Joao Pontelo denounced that there are problems, and require the intervention and the responsibility of the Pastors, who are the leaders of the Church in this area. He also said that the current meeting of Santarém marks the way to follow in the next five years.
The X Meeting of Bishops will prepare a document as a final conclusion, and three letters, addressed to the rulers of the States of the Amazon, to the People of God and to the Holy Father Benedict XVI. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 05/07/2012)

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