



AFRICA/SIERRA LEONE - Elections: many promises, but no candidate has said where he will get the resources to implement them

Freetown (Agenzia Fides) - "With these elections, conducted in a peaceful and exemplary manner, the people of Sierra Leone confirms the outgoing President. The announcement of the results was not too peaceful and there have been difficulties and protests on behalf of the supporters of the defeated candidate, but the President of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), Christiana A.M. Thorpe, gave official publication of the results on November 23," says to Fides Agency Fr. Gerardo Caglioni, Xaverian missionary, commenting on the outcome of the presidential elections in Sierra Leone held on November 17 (see Fides 17/11/2012).

Ernest Bai Koroma was re-elected for a second term of five years, beating in the first round (with 58.7%, that is to say 1,314,881 votes) Julius Maada Bio, 48, of the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party), who obtained 37.4% of the vote. The required majority was 55%. Otherwise a ballot with a second round would have been required.

"In the program of the election campaign of both major candidates, there were promises to build a better Sierra Leone. The APC (All People's Congress) pointed out the improvement carried out compared to the past government and was committed to infrastructure, agriculture, in expectation of life, in international relations and development. The SLPP instead highlighted the good things it had achieved in the past, when it consolidated peace and reaffirmed the authority of the state – immediately after the war between 2002 and 2007 - as well as development, infrastructure, economy and good governance," recalls the missionary.

Fr. Caglione emphasizes, however, "no one has been able to state precisely how they intended to find the resources to fully realize the good programs presented. This applies in particular to the party that has just won the election. One consideration that could weigh heavily on the future of the Country, if we consider that many promises are not always fully maintained or perhaps often circumvented. "

"I remember - adds Fr. Caglioni - that in the past, Sierra Leone was called the Athens of West Africa, which is now one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world. It occupies the 180th place out of 187 in the scale of developed countries. Poverty covers 78% of the population and its residents have a per capita income of \$ 1.25 per day. As regards to infant mortality it occupies the 12th place among the highest in the world. One in eight women dies in childbirth and the last cholera epidemic claimed 259 victims."

On the other hand, education does not improve as expected, public transport and electricity do not cover much of the national territory. Drinking water is not always available. The extraction of precious minerals (such as rutile, diamonds and precious stones, bauxite, gold and iron) and the recent oil exploration – of good quality – do not promise to greatly improve the quality of life of population.

"The global economy leaves some doubt on the future cooperation (with the West or the Chinese?) And new partners do not always convince the people of Sierra Leone. Not always their interest and placement in the international market corresponds for the good and the desire for progress in Sierra Leone," concludes Fr. Caglioni. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 26/11/2012)