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AMERICA/PANAMA - The Church ready to mediate between the government and doctors on strike

Panama City (Agenzia Fides) - The President of Panama, Ricardo Martinelli, publicly thanked the Archbishop of Panama, His Exc. Mgr. José Domingo Ulloa, because the Catholic Church has agreed to participate as a mediator in the dispute between the government and doctors who have been on strike for a few weeks (see Fides 10/10/2013), and with other health associations. The reason for the protest is law 69, which authorizes the employment of foreign doctors, especially for the inner areas of the country, and that, according to the strikers, will begin a gradual privatization of the health system.
"Law 69 aims to speed up a process that must resolve the urgent need to appoint specialists needed in the inner areas of the Republic", said President Martinelli. "It is a law to help people, not against the Panamanian doctors. Therefore, as an expression of a government that has never closed the door to dialogue, the Minister of Health has always maintained communication with doctors unions in order to integrate their comments on the draft. The proof of this is the fact that 14 of their observations, 11 were included in the project", the President said to the local press.
Mgr. José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta improvised a press conference (whose video was sent to Agenzia Fides) during which he confirmed the Church's intervention for a first contact between the parties. "We are at a critical moment - stressed the Archbishop - where we should not look who is to blame, but change attitude and be able to communicate. We must, once again, trust others, because we have completely lost credibility among ourselves, and with others. But all this must change". From the latest information we learn that most of the doctors returned to work, but the situation remains critical, and in some health centers, very tense. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 16/10/2013)

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