



## **AMERICA/COLOMBIA - The popular referendum on peace agreements with the FARC is almost ready**

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - The Colombian Senate approved after a long discussion, with 59 votes in favor and 5 against, the law that will allow to hold a referendum on whether to approve peace agreements with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) during the parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in 2014. According to the note sent to Fides Agency, the text should now be passed on to the House of Representatives. If approved, it will be finally sent to the signature of the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos. The legislative elections will be held next March, while presidential elections in May.

The reaction of the FARC to the news has not been entirely positive, in fact, Rodrigo Granda, known as the "chancellor" of the FARC, told the press: "We continue to believe that the solution for all is a National Constituent Assembly". Then he added: "Peace talks are not a car that can be run at the speed you want. Time is necessary. If the government accelerates changing its position, sometimes inflexible, it will find a positive response from us, because our proposals are serious and responsible, and we also want the country to see and analyze, it has nothing to do with impositions".

In almost a year of negotiations, the parties agreed only on the first item on the agenda, that is, the agrarian question. For months, the talks are stuck on the political participation of the guerrillas in the life of the nation, once peace is restored. The Catholic Church has offered itself, in different circumstances as a mediator for dialogue and has promoted initiatives to work for peace with armed groups (see Fides 22/10/2013). (CE) (Agenzia Fides 25/10/2013)