



## **ASIA/MYANMAR - Ethnic minorities at a conference: a common strategy in view of a peace agreement**

Myitkyina (Agenzia Fides) - A session of talks between the representatives of 19 ethnic Burmese minority groups started today in the Kachin State in northern Myanmar, which aims to develop a common position and strategy, in view of a possible peace agreement with the government of the country. As Fides learns, the goal is to put an end to decades of armed conflict and restore a situation of social peace in Myanmar, troubled by civil conflicts. The conference will be held on 3 and 4 November in Myitkyina, capital of the Kachin state, which will be attended by international observers such as the UN special envoy, Vijay Nambiar. Among the major ethnic groups gathered today, there are the Kachin, the Karen as well as members of other minority groups such as Karenni, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Wa, Pa -O, Palaung. The groups will propose a cease-fire at a national level, in preparation for the conference of Myitkyina and a subsequent meeting with government negotiators, to be held in the country's capital, Naypyidaw.

As reported to Fides, the churches and civil society organizations across the country have welcomed the conference of ethnic groups as a step "for the creation of stability and peace in Myanmar" and "to build a nation that respects a standard of human rights and democracy". The Catholic Church, in particular, has always insisted that "peace with ethnic minorities" is a priority for the nation and is a prerequisite for building a truly free nation, which ensures well-being and development of all citizens. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 29/10/2013)