



AMERICA/VENEZUELA - The Church at National Conference for Peace: find ways and means for dialogue to resolve the difficulties of Venezuela

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) – The president of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, yesterday Wednesday 26 February, opened the National Conference for Peace, with the participation of representatives of all the social sectors, only the principal leaders of the opposition were absent, while all over the country protests continue.

Urging for dialogue "open and tolerant" among the various groups of social and political life in Venezuela, Maduro, accompanied by his ministers and the chairman of the National Assembly (Parliament), Diosdado Cabello, reached out to the absent opposition, urging it to take part in future such meetings. The opposition leader, and former candidate for presidency, Henrique Capriles, had announced that while being in favour of peace, he would not attend the meeting which he described a "puppet parade " (see Fides 26/02/2014).

Conference speakers included mayors, journalists, entrepreneurs and representatives of society. Among them, Fides learns from a local source, there was Papal Nuncio in Venezuela, Archbishop Aldo Giordano, who read out an appeal made by Pope Francis on 26 February at the end of the general Wednesday audience in St Peter's Square in Rome : "I sincerely hope violence and hostility will cease as soon as possible and that all Venezuelans, beginning with political and institutional leaders will work to promote reconciliation, through mutual forgiveness and sincere dialogue, respectful of truth and justice, able to tackle concrete issues for the common good".

After this it was the turn of the secretary general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Venezuela, Bishop Jesús González de Zárate Salas, auxiliary Bishop of Caracas, who assured those present that the local Church is ready and willing to "find ways and means for dialogue to resolve the difficulties of Venezuela and promote the common good". (CE) (Agenzia Fides, 27/02/2014)