



ASIA/MYANMAR - The Archbishop of Yangon: "The census is a golden opportunity for peace and development"

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - "The census is a positive step: we hope it will be a fair and transparent process. It is a golden opportunity to promote and strengthen peace and development in the nation": So says the message sent to Fides Agency by the Archbishop of Yangon, His Exc. Mgr. Charles Maung Bo, expressing his hopes on the process of the national census, which began yesterday, March 30, and will end on April 10. After 30 years, in a period of transition after decades of military dictatorship, the census, according to experts, is a crucial step for the planning and national development, but it could also be an opportunity to inflame the already strong ethnic and religious tensions that exist in the country (see Fides 18/02/2014). Civil society groups have called on the Burmese citizens to not specify religion and ethnicity, as requested by one of the points of the questionnaire which will be submitted to them for the census.

In a message sent to Fides, the Archbishop urged the government to "ensure a fully transparent process, strictly following international standards, without any manipulation of the data". The census, says Mgr. Bo, must respect the three pillars that make up the Burmese population: "Identity, culture and resources. Any attempt to abuse them is an attack on peace". In addition, the Archbishop recalled: "Our country is a country of immigrants and refugees".

"The journey of Myanmar towards peace and prosperity is difficult", concludes the text. "The government and the international community have to ensure that major events such as the census will serve to build confidence, instilling a sense of belonging in a nation where justice and transparency ensure the rights of vulnerable communities". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 31/03/2014)