Dominican Republic: Positive relationships are key to advancing religious freedom, say Latin American advocates

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Inter-American Division  >  Communication Department

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April 25, 2012 - Punta Cana, Dominican Republic...Libna Stevens/IRLA

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“"To pursue religious liberty, you must engage in establishing a good relationship among your colleagues and government officials," said Honorable Jose Manuel Glass Gutierrez, a judge of the Penal Chamber of the Appeals Court in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic.

Glass had simple advice to begin with: "Don't engage in personal debate with atheists or non-religious leaders and colleagues," said Glass. "Engage in positive actions and point out the negative ones without mixing in religion."

Senator Dr. Charles W. Schultz from Colombia agreed as he explained the 20-year efforts he's been working towards ensuring that faith groups enjoy the same religious freedom as others.

Paulo Tort Ortega, Director General of Religious Affairs in Mexico, chimed in about how further efforts in religious liberty must be pursued in his country and the rest of the world.

Tort explained that Mexico's legislative assembly has approved inclusion of religious liberty in the constitution, pending final approval from all the states in the nation. He was instrumental in helping establish a relationship between the state and the churches.

"Our intention," said Tort, "is how the state of Mexico can move forward in consolidating the democratic process with religious liberty, pursuing offenders and procuring justice and the rebuilding of the social fabric."

"The churches and religious associations have the extraordinary capability to improve families...and help promote a culture of values to children and set of beliefs in faith communities to strengthen a new generation of citizens."

As part of the panel, Dr. Carlos Alberto Portillo, Minister of Religious Affairs in Honduras, reported on the strides made to oppose issues adversely affecting religious liberty. Portillo is in the process of working on a new law of equality in religious freedom in the entire country.
A panel of high-level leaders discuss principles of religious freedom advocacy.