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## **THE NEED FOR NEW APPROACHES ON RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCES**

The history of religious freedom in the world is of great interest. This is the story of the ups and downs of freedom, a history characterized by intolerance, discrimination or persecution, as well as hopes and challenges, struggles and victories. Our world is a complex and polarized one, with trends, contrasts, insecurity and crisis. It is undeniable that religious liberty is confronted with new and unprecedented challenges due to the hatred, increasing the violence and terrorism in the name of religion, and aggressive secularism, as well as an important redefinition of the major social institutions.

Why so many people suffered and are still suffering persecution, discrimination, intolerance and death? There are many reasons, but one is due to lack of acceptance that as human being, we are different and we have differences. For that we need to have new approaches on respect for differences.

1. Respect for differences begins with acknowledging the rights, dignity and perspectives of everyone in a thoughtful manner and then by treating others as one would like to be treated. Practically, this is Jesus' principle, the golden rule of the Bible: *“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*

2. It would be wise to look forward and reflect on how to live wisely and treat or understand people, how we look to religions, beliefs, cultures, and try to understand why it is so important to have a respect for others' differences.

3. We need to learn about other cultures, religions, beliefs, customs and traditions; this will establish and maintain harmony in our relationships and peace in the world.

Consequently, I believe that governments, diplomats, religious leaders, academia and non-governmental organizations can effectively work together at international, regional and national levels to promote peace and security, tolerance and respect for diversity, religion or belief and always defending the human dignity and the principle of freedom of religion for all people.

To what extent is religious freedom distinctive and necessary in our society today?

Religious Liberty is a cornerstone of freedom for all people. For it, the AIDLR “doesn't represent any particular church or political party” and, do not defend one religion, church or belief, but defend and want to protect a principle: the Principle of religious liberty for ALL people.