

Press Releases: Interview With Devin Sean Watkins of Vatican News

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Telephone
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SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning, sir. It's Mike speaking.

QUESTION: Good morning, Secretary Pompeo. It's a pleasure to speak to you here and we thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh my goodness, it's an honor. I'm truly thrilled to be on the line with you.

QUESTION: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, you're set to host the U.S.'s first summit on religious freedom with your counterparts from around the world. What do you hope to achieve with this meeting?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, look, it's truly a remarkable thing. The State Department, under President Trump, has made religious freedom a true priority for this administration, and so we're bringing together, this gathering, over 80 delegations. Forty-plus will be my counterparts, foreign ministers from around the world, the largest number ever gathered here at the State Department.

And our mission is really straightforward and important. It is to spread the word of the importance of religious freedom for every individual around the world. The – we want to press for that. There are countries that share America's understanding of that, there are those who don't, and we want to move each of them in the right direction towards increasing – increasing religious freedom. People of all faiths should have the right to worship as they please, or if they choose not to, they should be permitted to do that as well.

QUESTION: And what role do you see Pope Francis and the Catholic Church playing when it comes to promoting religious freedom?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We think they can play a central role. We think it's incredibly important that not only governments – as in the State Department

and the United States – but religious leaders too understand that they need to press for religious freedom for their particular faith and their beliefs, but that they should also play a role in ensuring that there's religious freedom for those that share other faiths than the one. So we think the Catholic Church can play an important role in the mission that we're attempting to achieve through gathering these folks in Washington in the days ahead.

QUESTION: And one last question: What relationship do you see between religious freedom, human rights, and economic interests?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great question. I think they're all deeply connected. Trump administration and I both agree that religious freedom has enormous benefits for countries. When individuals are permitted to act and behave freely with respect to their faith, they have the capacity for greatness. And so we see a deep connection between religious freedom as a fundamental human right, and the economic benefits that flow to countries that have this religious freedom. Investors prefer countries that have broad religious freedom. Commercial actors see places with religious freedom as places more open and with less risk. We think that religious freedom and human rights and economic success are deeply connected, deeply tied, and we think it benefits American foreign policy to reinforce this.

QUESTION: Okay, Mr. Secretary, I think that's all we – the questions we have. So thank you very much again for talking with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Devin, great. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful day.

QUESTION: Thanks, you too.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

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