

## **RESPECTING AND PROTECTING FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF**

- A. We appreciate this opportunity to review China's progress and development of state mechanisms to respect freedom of religious belief. Xinjiang is a region where several religions have existed side by side since ancient times. The religions in Xinjiang today include Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism and Orthodox Eastern Church.
- B. Freedom of religious belief is a basic right bestowed by the Constitution on all its citizens. It is stipulated in the Constitution as follows: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief." The Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy clearly rules, "Organs of self-government in ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of religious belief to citizens of the various ethnic groups..."; "No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion..."; "The state protects normal religious activities." In addition, the State Council promulgated the Regulations on Religious Affairs in 2004, which stipulates, "Citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief..."; "The state protects normal religious activities, as well as the legal rights and interests of believers, religious organizations and venues for religious activities in accordance with the law."
- C. The Chinese government is fully committed to a policy of freedom of religious belief, respecting its citizens' freedom to believe or not believe in religion. Citizens are equal before the law and must carry out the duties imposed by the Constitution and other laws, whether they believe in or not believe in any religion. Anyone who encroaches on the citizens' freedom of believing in or not believing in any religion shall bear legal liability, and citizens both believing in or not believing in any religion also bear legal liability for breaching the Constitution and the law.

D. The normal requirements of religious believers have been satisfied. The government of the autonomous region has managed to do a better job in the religion-related work in view of the actual conditions of the various religions; it has shown full respect to citizens' right of freedom of religious beliefs.