Regulations on Religious Affairs of the PRC

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Chapter I — General Provisions

Article 1 — These Regulations are formulated for the purpose of safeguarding citizens' freedom of religious belief, maintaining harmony between religion and society, regulating the administration of religious affairs, and enhancing the level of legalization in the administration of religious affairs.

Article 2 — Citizens shall have freedom of religious belief. No organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion, nor may they discriminate against citizens who are religious believers or citizens who are not religious believers. Religious believers, citizens who are not religious believers, and citizens who do not follow the same religion shall respect each other and coexist in harmony.

Article 3 — The state shall protect normal religious activities in accordance with law, actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society, and safeguard the lawful rights and interests of religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious believers. Religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious believers shall abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations, and rules, practice the core socialist values, and safeguard national unity, ethnic solidarity, religious harmony, and social stability. No organization or individual may make use of religion to engage in activities that endanger national security, undermine ethnic solidarity, disrupt social order, infringe upon the lawful rights and interests of citizens, or impede the implementation of the administrative, judicial, and educational systems of the state, nor may they engage in other activities that harm the public interest of society or the lawful rights and interests of citizens. No organization or individual may make use of religion to engage in illegal activities on campus or other forms of illegal religious propagation. No organization or individual shall establish a religious organization or a site for religious activities in a place other than a registered site for religious activities to conduct religious activities, nor shall they organize citizens to leave the country to participate in religious training, meetings, or activities in violation of relevant state regulations.

Article 4 — The state shall administer religious affairs in accordance with law, applying the principles of protection of the lawful, suppression of the unlawful, containment of extremism, resistance of infiltration, and combating of criminal activities. Religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious believers shall adhere to the principle of independence and self-governance in handling religious affairs. Religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious clergy shall not accept domination by foreign forces, and shall operate independently in handling their religious affairs.

Article 5 — All religions shall adhere to the principle of independence and self-governance. Religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious affairs shall not be subject to the control of foreign forces.

Article 6 — People's governments at all levels shall strengthen the work on religious affairs, establish and improve work mechanisms for religious affairs, and safeguard the funding and personnel necessary for the administration of religious affairs. Departments of religious affairs of people's governments at or above the county level shall administer religious affairs involving national interests and the public interest of society in accordance with law, and other relevant departments of people's governments at or above the county level shall, within the scope of their respective duties, be responsible for relevant administrative work in accordance with law. People's governments at the township level shall do a good job in the administration of religious affairs within their respective administrative regions. Villagers' committees and residents' committees shall assist people's governments in lawfully administering religious affairs in accordance with law. People's governments at all levels shall listen to the opinions of religious groups, religious academies, sites for religious activities, and religious believers, and coordinate work on the administration of religious affairs.

Chapter II — Religious Groups

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Article 7 — The establishment, modification, and dissolution of religious groups shall be subject to examination and approval by the departments of religious affairs of people's governments at or above the county level in accordance with the regulations on the administration of registration of social organizations. Religious groups shall, in accordance with the state regulations on the administration of social organizations, prepare charters. National religious groups shall, in accordance with their respective charters, carry out work on the selection, appointment, and removal of presidents and vice presidents, the recognition of religious teaching staff, and other matters.

Article 8 — Religious groups shall have the following functions:

(1) assisting the people's government in implementing the laws, regulations, rules, and policies on religious affairs, and safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of religious believers;

(2) providing guidance on religious affairs and establishing rules for the democratic management of sites for religious activities;

(3) providing education and training in patriotism, the rule of law, core socialist values, and the excellent traditional Chinese culture for religious teaching staff, and providing other educational and training activities prescribed by laws, regulations, and rules;

(4) conducting research on the interpretation of religious doctrine and canon, and other activities of religious thought building;

(5) conducting the recognition and administration of religious teaching staff, and other activities prescribed by laws, regulations, rules, and the charters of religious groups; and

(6) carrying out other functions prescribed by laws, regulations, rules, and charters.

Article 9 — National religious groups, provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government religious groups may, in accordance with their respective charters, establish religious academies. The establishment of religious academies in other organizations or individuals is prohibited.

Article 10 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities may, in accordance with relevant state regulations, prepare, print, and distribute internal publications of religious materials. Publications involving religious content shall comply with the relevant state regulations on publication administration.

Article 11 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities may, in accordance with relevant state regulations, establish public welfare charitable undertakings through donation or other means. Economic organizations not related to religion shall not be subject to the administration of religious groups, religious academies, or sites for religious activities.

Article 12 — When religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities establish internet religious information services, they shall apply to the telecommunications regulatory authority of the relevant province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government, or to the Cyberspace Administration of China, for a permit or complete the filing formalities in accordance with the state regulations on internet information services. Departments of religious affairs shall, in accordance with law, conduct supervision and administration of internet religious information services.

Chapter III — Sites for Religious Activities

Article 13 — The establishment of sites for religious activities shall meet the following conditions:

(1) the intention of establishment does not violate the provisions of Articles 3 and 4 of these Regulations;

(2) a certain number of local religious believers have the need for regular collective religious activities;

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(3) there are religious teaching staff to preside over religious activities or personnel meeting the qualifications for religious teaching staff as prescribed by their respective religions;

(4) the necessary funding is available, and the source of funding channels is lawful;

(5) the distribution of sites is reasonable, and the site does not impede the normal life, production, or work order of neighboring units or residents. The establishment of sites for religious activities for externally-oriented religious activities shall also comply with other relevant state regulations.

Article 14 — The establishment of sites for religious activities shall be applied for by religious groups to the departments of religious affairs of local people's governments at or above the county level. Departments of religious affairs of local people's governments at or above the county level shall, within 30 days of receiving the application, examine it and provide examination opinions; for those that meet the conditions, a decision of approval shall be made after reporting to the department of religious affairs of the people's government at the provincial level.

Article 15 — Sites for religious activities that have been approved and registered shall obtain a "Permit for Sites for Religious Activities." The legal representative of the democratic management organization of the site shall sign for and receive the permit.

Article 16 — The merger, division, termination, or change of registration particulars of sites for religious activities shall be subject to the examination and approval of the original registration administrative organ.

Article 17 — Sites for religious activities shall establish democratic management organizations, and democratically administer the affairs of the sites. Members of democratic management organizations of sites for religious activities shall be elected through democratic consultation and reported to the registration administrative organ for record. The construction of sites for religious activities shall comply with the state regulations on land use administration, urban and rural planning, cultural relic protection, and fire safety. Sites for religious activities shall strengthen their internal management, establish and improve rules for personnel, finance, assets, accounting, public security, fire safety, cultural relic protection, health, epidemic prevention, and other management systems in accordance with relevant state regulations and local realities, and accept the guidance, supervision, and inspection of relevant local government departments.

Article 18 — Sites for religious activities shall strengthen their internal management, establish and improve management systems in accordance with relevant state regulations, and accept the guidance, supervision, and inspection of relevant local government departments.

Article 19 — Sites for religious activities shall prevent material losses, and shall have corresponding fire safety facilities and security measures.

Chapter IV — Religious Teaching Staff

Article 20 — Religious teaching staff shall be recognized by religious groups and reported to the departments of religious affairs of people's governments at or above the county level for record. Religious teaching staff who have not obtained or have forfeited their qualification as religious teaching staff may not engage in activities as religious teaching staff. The relevant provisions of the state on the social security of religious teaching staff shall be implemented by religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities.

Article 21 — Religious teaching staff shall preside over religious activities, hold religious ceremonies, participate in the democratic management of sites for religious activities, and engage in other activities in accordance with law and regulations. Religious teaching staff who perform their duties in accordance with law shall be protected by law.

Article 22 — Religious teaching staff shall abide by the relevant provisions of the state on religious teaching staff conducting activities in places other than their own sites for religious activities, and on religious teaching

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staff inviting outside religious teaching staff to their own sites for religious activities.

Article 23 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall, in accordance with the provisions of laws, regulations, and rules, and the requirements of the religious groups, establish and improve rules for the administration of religious teaching staff, strengthen education and training in patriotism, the rule of law, and religious thought, and optimize the incentive and assessment mechanisms. Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall report information about religious teaching staff to the departments of religious affairs of the local people's governments.

Chapter V — Religious Activities

Article 24 — Collective religious activities of religious believers shall generally be conducted at registered sites for religious activities, which shall be organized by religious groups, religious academies, or sites for religious activities, and presided over by religious teaching staff or persons who meet the conditions prescribed by their respective religions. Such activities shall be conducted within the time determined in accordance with the canons and doctrines of the religion.

Article 25 — Religious activities shall not be conducted at sites for religious activities that are not registered lawfully. Religious believers holding religious activities at their own residences shall not affect the normal life, work, or study order of other people.

Article 26 — Religious activities shall be conducted within the scope prescribed by laws, regulations, and rules. No organization or individual may make use of religion to engage in illegal activities, disrupt social order, harm citizens' health, obstruct the implementation of the state educational system, or engage in other activities that harm the national interest, the public interest of society, or the lawful rights and interests of citizens.

Article 27 — When religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities hold religious activities, they shall take necessary measures to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of the activities.

Article 28 — Religious activities involving religious believers outside their own sites for religious activities, such as large-scale religious activities held across provinces, autonomous regions, or municipalities directly under the Central Government, or large-scale religious activities held outside sites for religious activities, shall be subject to the approval of the departments of religious affairs of the people's governments at the provincial level.

Article 29 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities that plan to construct large-scale open-air religious statues within sites for religious activities shall submit applications to the departments of religious affairs of the people's governments at the provincial level. The departments of religious affairs of the people's governments at the provincial level shall, within 30 days of receiving the application, provide examination opinions and submit them to the department of religious affairs under the State Council for approval. The construction of large-scale open-air religious statues at places other than sites for religious activities, or the construction of large-scale open-air religious statues at sites for religious activities without following prescribed formalities, is prohibited.

Article 30 — The publication of publicly distributed religious publications shall comply with the state regulations on publication administration. The content of publicly distributed religious publications shall comply with the state regulations on publication administration and shall not contain the following content:

(1) content that undermines the unity of the state and the solidarity of all ethnic groups;

(2) content that advocates extremism or terrorism;

(3) content that insults or slanders others, or infringes upon the lawful rights and interests of others; or

(4) other content prohibited by laws, administrative regulations, or state regulations.

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Article 31 — With respect to religious activities conducted through the internet, the relevant provisions of the state regulations on internet information services shall apply. Internet religious information services shall not contain content prohibited by laws, administrative regulations, or state regulations. Providers of internet religious information services shall not create, reproduce, publish, or disseminate content prohibited by laws, administrative regulations, or state regulations, and they shall take measures to prevent the dissemination of illegal and harmful religious information.

Chapter VI — Religious Property

Article 32 — The lawful property of religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities, such as real estate and movable property, income, and other lawful rights and interests, shall be protected by law. No organization or individual may occupy, withhold, misappropriate, divide without authorization, destroy, or seal up or confiscate the lawful property of religious groups, religious academies, or sites for religious activities. No organization or individual may make any donation to or invest in any religious group, religious academy, or site for religious activity in the nature of commercial promotion, or forcibly or in disguised form, in the name of religion, engage in commercial promotion.

Article 33 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities are non-profit organizations. Their property and income shall be used for activities consistent with their purposes and for public welfare charitable undertakings, and shall not be distributed among members.

Article 34 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall implement the unified financial management system prescribed by the state, establish and improve financial management systems, and accept the supervision of the relevant government departments.

Article 35 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall, in accordance with the relevant state regulations on tax administration, handle tax registration and declare and pay taxes in accordance with law. Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities that meet the conditions for tax exemption shall enjoy tax exemption preferences in accordance with law.

Article 36 — When religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities accept donations, they shall issue receipts uniformly printed or supervised by the financial departments of the provincial people's governments. Donations accepted by religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall be used for activities consistent with their purposes and shall not be misappropriated for other purposes.

Article 37 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities that plan to expropriate land or demolish structures on sites for religious activities shall obtain the consent of the relevant religious group or the democratic management organization of the site for religious activities in advance. If the land or structures are expropriated or demolished, appropriate compensation shall be provided.

Article 38 — The relevant departments of local people's governments shall coordinate and handle issues concerning the ownership and use of property of religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities in accordance with law. The property rights registration of property owned by religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall be handled by the departments of housing and urban-rural development, land and resources, and other departments in accordance with the law and regulations on real property registration.

Chapter VII — Religious Academies

Article 39 — Religious academies shall be established by national or provincial religious groups. The establishment of religious academies in other organizations or individuals is prohibited. The establishment of religious academies shall meet the following conditions:

(1) having a clear training objective and school-running charter;

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(2) having qualified teaching staff who meet the training requirements;

(3) having the necessary funding for running the school and a stable source of funding;

(4) having teaching venues, facilities, and equipment that meet the training requirements; and

(5) having a dedicated internal management organization.

Article 40 — The establishment of a national religious academy shall be reported to the department of religious affairs under the State Council after examination by the national religious group. The establishment of a religious academy by a provincial religious group shall be reported to the department of religious affairs under the State Council for approval after examination by the department of religious affairs of the provincial people's government. The department of religious affairs under the State Council shall, within a prescribed period, make a decision to approve or not to approve the establishment. Where approval is granted, a permit for the operation of the religious academy shall be issued.

Article 41 — Religious academies shall conduct teaching activities within the approved scope of subjects and programs, strengthen the routine management of teaching activities, and ensure the quality of teaching.

Article 42 — Religious academies shall have the right to admit students in accordance with law and regulations, and shall recruit students within the approved scope of enrollment. The qualifications, enrollment scope, and procedures for admission shall comply with relevant state regulations. The enrollment brochures and advertising of religious academies shall be truthful and lawful and shall not contain false or misleading information.

Article 43 — Religious academies shall, in accordance with the relevant state regulations, set up degree programs appropriate to the training level of the religious academy. Students who meet the requirements for the award of academic degrees shall be awarded corresponding academic degrees in accordance with the relevant state regulations.

Chapter VIII — Overseas Relations

Article 44 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall, on the basis of the principles of independence, self-governance, mutual respect, equality, and friendship, conduct exchanges with overseas religious organizations. Other organizations or individuals that engage in religious exchange activities externally shall obtain the consent of the relevant religious groups and report to the relevant government departments for approval.

Article 45 — Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities that invite overseas religious organizations or religious teaching staff to give lectures or preach, or that accept donations from overseas organizations or individuals exceeding a certain amount, shall be subject to examination and approval by the departments of religious affairs of the people's governments at or above the county level.

Article 46 — Religious teaching staff who leave the country to participate in religious training, meetings, or activities abroad, or who are invited abroad to give lectures or preach, shall be subject to examination and approval by the relevant religious groups and relevant government departments.

Article 47 — Foreigners who conduct religious activities within the territory of China shall abide by Chinese laws and regulations. Foreigners who conduct religious activities within the territory of China shall be subject to the administration and supervision of the relevant government departments in accordance with law. Foreigners within the territory of China may participate in religious activities at registered sites for religious activities such as Buddhist monasteries, Taoist temples, mosques, and churches in accordance with law. With the invitation of religious groups such as Buddhist, Taoist, Islamic, Catholic, and Christian groups at or above the provincial level, and with the approval of the departments of religious affairs of the people's governments at or above the provincial level, foreigners may preach or give lectures at registered sites for religious activities.

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Article 48 — Foreigners who conduct religious activities within the territory of China shall not establish religious organizations, establish offices of religious organizations, establish sites for religious activities, or run religious academies; shall not recruit followers among Chinese citizens, appoint religious teaching staff, or conduct other missionary activities; and shall not engage in other religious activities without the approval of the relevant Chinese government departments.

Article 49 — It is prohibited to conduct religious activities within the territory of China that have the effect of splitting the state or undermining national unity, or to conduct or participate in activities that endanger national security. Foreign organizations or individuals shall not engage in activities within the territory of China in violation of these Regulations. Religious groups, religious academies, and sites for religious activities shall not accept additional conditions attached by overseas organizations or individuals when accepting donations.

Chapter IX — Supplementary Provisions

Article 50 — The specific measures for the implementation of these Regulations shall be formulated by the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government in accordance with these Regulations and in light of their actual local circumstances.

Article 51 — These Regulations shall not apply to religious activities in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Article 52 — Religious affairs between the mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region or the Macao Special Administrative Region shall be handled with reference to the provisions on overseas religious affairs in these Regulations.

Article 53 — These Regulations shall go into effect as of February 1, 2018. The Regulations on Religious Affairs promulgated by the State Council on November 30, 2004 shall be repealed simultaneously.

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