

## ***Religious Freedom Reaffirmed***

*At a conference in Beijing on June 9, Ye Xiaowen, director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs under the State Council, the highest organization for religious administration, cited a series of facts to refute Western reports about the lack of freedom of religious belief in China. Among them:*

- “China’s policy of freedom of religious belief has been supported and welcomed by the broad masses of religious people in the country and has been praised by the international community.”
- But in recent years, some Westerners accused the Chinese government of “persecuting religious people” and of “intolerance of religion”, citing the government’s crackdown on the activities of a small number of cults threatening social and public interest.
- Since the 1980s, cults have formed in various places in China, and although small in number they have greatly harmed Chinese society and aroused hatred from both ordinary and religious people.
- As to the religious freedom of Hong Kong residents, the Religious Affairs Bureau will not send a single employee to Hong Kong or apply mainland religious laws and regulations there.
- Hong Kong’s religious affairs will be managed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in accordance with the Basic Law free from central government intervention.
- According to the Basic Law, religious organizations in the HKSAR and other parts of China should abide by the principle of “no subordination, no interference, and mutual respect” in conducting exchanges with each other.
- We support friendly exchanges between the mainland and Hong Kong on the basis of the above mentioned principles.
- When conducting religious activities in other parts of the country, Hong Kong residents must follow local laws and regulations; likewise, people from the mainland should respect Hong Kong’s religions and regulations. (*Beijing Review* Vol. 40, No. 26, June 30-July 6, 1997, p. 4)