

Text of the Chinese Delegation's Statement at the Sixth Forum on Minority Issues – Promoting Constructive Interfaith Dialogue, Consultation and Exchange

(The afternoon of November 27, 2013)

Madam Chairperson:

China's constitution explicitly stipulates that freedom of religious belief is a fundamental right of citizens. International human rights instruments are explicitly stipulated within China's laws and regulations. In order to ensure citizens' freedom of religious belief, maintain harmony among and between religions, and preserve social concord, the Chinese government promulgated the Regulations on Religious Affairs, which makes specific provisions on safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of religious bodies and religious citizens. Chinese law also stipulates that at the same time as citizens enjoy the right of freedom of religious belief, they must also assume the obligations prescribed by law.

China believes that conducting dialogue and exchange between people of different religions on the basis of mutual respect and seeking common ground while setting aside differences helps to promote peace and development in the world. China is a country of diverse religions, including indigenous Daoism, and religions introduced to China, such as Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Catholicism. China has over 100 million religious believers, around 140,000 sites for religious activities, and approximately 340,000 religious personnel. There are around 5,500 national and regional religious bodies. China's different religions have undergone a long period of development and mutual absorption, giving rise to harmonious coexistence, mutual learning and collective development, which has become an important part of Chinese culture.

Madam Chairperson, 'harmony' is the essence of Chinese culture and is the highest value of Chinese society. The concept of harmony provides the firm foundation for the harmonious coexistence of China's different religions. The Chinese government advocates the idea of religious harmony and actively pushes for intra-faith and interfaith harmony, and harmonious relationships between religion and society and between government and religion. In 2010, all national religious groups in China held the Symposium on Promoting Religious Harmony, where the Joint Declaration on Promoting Religious Harmony was made.

The Chinese government encourages and supports Chinese religious groups to participate in intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the world. At present, religious groups in China have established friendly relations with religious organizations in more than 80 countries and regions. In 2007, China hosted the third ASEM Interfaith Dialogue where the Nanjing Statement on promoting interfaith dialogue was passed.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.