

Ha Noi, \_\_\_\_\_, 2016

4<sup>th</sup> draft

## LAW ON RELIGION AND BELIEF

Pursuant to the Constitution of Socialist Republic of Vietnam;  
The National Assembly enacts the Law on Religion and Belief as follows:

### Section I

#### APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

##### Article 1. Scope

This Law regulates the freedom of religion and belief, the rights and obligations of those who adopt a belief, adherents of a religion, religious organizations, and foreigners who legally reside in Vietnam whose activities relate to religion or belief; and the responsibility of government agencies, religious organizations and individuals in the application and protection of the freedom of religion and belief.

##### Article 2. Freedom of religion and belief

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of religion and belief, to follow or to not follow a religion. The government respects and protects the freedom of religion and belief of everyone. No one has the right to deprive others of this freedom.
2. People who have a belief and the adherents of a religion have the right to express their belief, to practice their religion at home and in legal places of worship, to participate in various kinds of religious activities, to serve in religious rituals and celebrations, and to engage in religious studies.
3. All religions are equal before the law.
4. The government shall ensure the right to conduct activities pertaining to religion and belief within the law and regulations, and to maintain and develop good cultural and ethical values of religions and beliefs.

##### Article 3. Glossary

In this Law, the terms below are interpreted as follows:

1. **Adherent:** a person who believes in a religion and is recognized by a religious organization.
2. **Person living a vowed life:** a person who chooses to live a particular way of life in accordance with the laws or doctrine of a religion.
3. **Clergy member:** an adherent who has been ordained, promoted, assigned, elected or nominated by a religious organization.

4. **Belief-based activities:** Activities that express the worship of ancestors, commemoration of people with meritorious service to the nation and/or their community. Religious operations and other national religious activities must reflect beautifully the traditional, historical, cultural, and ethical values of Vietnamese communities.
5. **Religious festivals:** festivals featuring religious activities aiming to satisfy a community's spiritual needs.
6. **Religious activities:** practice of rituals, prayers and/ or expression of religious beliefs.
7. **Religious operations:** dissemination and practice of the doctrines, laws, rituals of a religion; and management of a religious organization.
8. **Facility for activities related to belief:** place to carry out the activities expressing the belief of a community such as joss house, fane, shrine, ancestor worship place, and similar facilities.
9. **Religious facility:** main or other offices of a recognized religious organization, or a place to worship, practice and train specialists in religious activities.
10. **Religious organization:** a group of people who follow the same system of religious doctrine, laws, and rituals, and who are organized in a fixed structure recognized by the government.
11. **Affiliated religious organization:** a religious organization's unit established in accordance with the charter, provisions and rules of a government-approved religious organization with the objective of managing the religious organization, serving religious operations, involving group religious practice, and conducting social activities.

#### **Article 4. Rights and obligations of people having a belief and adherents of a religion**

1. People having a belief and religion adherents are entitled to all civil rights and are responsible for exercising their civic duties.
2. People having a belief and religion adherents must respect the freedom of religion and belief of others, to not impede others in their exercise of civil rights and civic duties, to preserve national traditions and cultural traits, and to comply with the law.
3. Those who are detained have the right to satisfy their personal need for religion and/or belief, conforming to the law and regulations in their detainment center.
4. Those who have completed their prison sentences or probation in compliance with the law have the right to lead religious rituals, to disseminate and teach religion, and to manage a religious organization once this organization is registered and approved by the proper government agency.

#### **Article 5. International interactions of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam pertaining to religion and belief**

1. The government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam interacts with countries, territories, and international religious organizations on the basis of respecting the independence and sovereignty of each other, of not interfering in the internal affairs of

each other, equality, mutual interest, and conformity to the laws of all parties involved and to international laws and practices.

2. If an international covenant to which the Socialist of Republic of Vietnam is a party has clauses that differ from this Law, the international covenant's clauses take precedence.

### **Article 6. Forbidden acts**

1. Discriminate against people for their religion and belief.
2. Force others to follow or renounce a religion or belief.
3. Show negative behavior toward the religion or belief of adherents of religious organizations which are recognized by the government.
4. Impede organizations or individuals in their participation in or conduct of legal religious operations or activities.
5. Take advantage of the freedom of religion and belief to:
  - a. Incite violence or conduct war-mongering propaganda to harm peace, independence, and the territorial integrity of Vietnam.
  - b. Conduct propaganda counter to the law or government policy, harm national unity, and sow divisions between ethnic groups and religions.
  - c. Harm national security, public order and safety, social ethics, and public health.
  - d. Harm the life, health, dignity, reputation and property of others; and obstruct the exercise of civil rights and civic duties by others.
  - e. Sully the image of national heroes and notables.
  - f. Seek private gains.
6. Lead religious rituals, disseminate and teach religion, manage religious organizations and officiate at religious festivals while in probation or serving a prison sentence.
7. Use religious facilities to conduct illegal activities.

## **Section II**

### **RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS**

#### **Article 7. Religious operations and religious festivals**

1. Religious operations within religious facilities and religious festivals within the community must conform to this Law and other related laws.
2. Articles 8, 9 and 10 of this Law do not apply to clan-specific worship houses.

#### **Article 8. Representatives or management of religious facilities**

1. Representatives or members of the management of religious facilities must be Vietnamese citizens in good standing, of good reputation in their community, and who are law-abiding.
2. Representatives or the management of religious facilities shall be elected or nominated by their community, or created or approved by the government.

3. The government reserves the right to specify the details related to this article.

### **Article 9. Annual registration for religious operations**

1. Every year, before November 15, the representatives or the management of religious facilities must send the registration application for religious operations that will take place in the following year to people's committees at the commune, ward or town level (henceforth called "commune-level PCs").

The registration application must include the name of the religious facility, the names of the organizer and manager of the operations, the estimated number of attendees, the content and form of the activities, and timing and duration of activities.

2. Within 10 business days from the date of receipt of the valid registration application, the commune-level PC must respond in writing. If the registration is not approved, the reason for the denial must be stated in writing.

### **Article 10. Religious operations in religious facilities**

1. The representatives or the management of religious facilities may organize religious activities according to the registered contents which have been approved by the commune-level PC and are legally responsible for religious activities that take place in their facilities.

2. Those who participate in religious activities in religious facilities must behave in a civilized manner, respect the law, and respect the regulations of the facilities.

### **Article 11. Religious celebrations**

1. The following religious festivals must be approved by people's committees at the province level or, for cities under the central government's jurisdiction, people's committees at the city level (henceforth called "province-level PCs) where the festivals are to take place:

- a. First-time festivals
- b. Festivals that resumed after an inactive period
- c. Festivals that were held periodically but contents, time, place and scale have changed.

2. For those festivals that are not mentioned in Item 1 of this article, organizers are responsible for informing the commune-level PC where the festivals take place, of the timing and duration, location, form and content of the festivals, and the list of members of the planning committee in writing 15 business days before the date of the event. In the event of natural disasters, epidemics, or the negative effect of the festivals on the social life, security, or public order in the local area, the commune-level PC has the authority to stop or suspend the festival, or reduce its scope.

3. Proceeds from the festivals must be disclosed and used in the operation of the religious facilities and conduct of festivals for the benefit of the community.

**Section III**  
**REGISTRATION FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES &**  
**REGISTRATION FOR RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS**

**Subsection 1**  
**REGISTRATION FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

**Article 12. Registration for religious activities**

1. Those citizens who need to gather for religious activities but do not possess any religious organization that is recognized by the government may register for religious activities with the province-level government agency that manages matters on religion and belief.
2. Conditions for registration for religious activities
  - a. The activities do not violate the regulations stated in Article 6 of this Law.
  - b. The applicant has a legal venue for religious activities
  - c. The organization’s representatives must be Vietnamese citizens who are in good standing and law-abiding.

**Subsection 2**  
**REGISTRATION FOR RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS**

**Article 13. Conditions for a registration for religious operations to be approved**

1. The registering organization consists of people who have the same belief, religious doctrine, religious law, rituals, credo, and objectives that adhere to the people and conform to the law.
2. The registering organization does not belong to another religious organization that has been recognized by the government.
3. The name of the registering organization is not the same as the name of another religious organization that has been recognized by the government nor the same as that of a national hero or a notable.
4. The registering organization has a legal office location.
5. The representative of the registering organization is a Vietnamese citizen who is in good standing and law-abiding.
6. The registering organization does not violate Article 6 of this Law.

**Article 14. Level of authorities approving the registration for religious operation**

1. The government unit in charge of religion and belief matters at the province level is responsible for approving registrations for religious activities of those organizations

whose operating area is mainly in one province or one city under the central government's jurisdiction

2. The government unit in charge of religion and belief matters at the central level is responsible for approving registrations for religious operation of those organizations whose operating area is in several provinces or cities under the government's jurisdiction.

### **Article 15. Religious operations allowed for a registered religious organization**

1. Once the registration is approved, the registered religious organization may:
  - a. Organize religious celebrations and rituals and teach religion at the registered location.
  - b. Organize conferences to approve its charter, regulations and related rules that were developed before registering with the government
  - c. Elect or nominate the leaders of the organization
  - d. Open religious training classes
  - e. Repair, improve or upgrade its religious facilities
  - f. Carry out charitable and humanitarian activities
2. When conducting religious actions stated in Item 1 of this article, the registered organization must respect the provisions of this Law and related legal documents.

### **Article 16. Revocation of the registered status of a religious organization**

The registered status of a registered religious organization is revoked if its actions deviate from its credo and objectives or violate Article 6 of this Law.

## **Section IV**

### **RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Subsection 1**

### **RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND AFFILIATED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Article 17. Conditions governing the recognition as a religious organization**

1. The applicant is approved by the government, has conducted religious operation during 10 consecutive years, and does not violate the provisions of Article 6 of this Law.
2. The applicant has a charter and regulations that reflect its credo, objectives and operating directions that adhere to the people, and conform to the law.
3. The applicant has a legal office and representative.

#### **Article 18. Authority to recognize religious organizations**

1. The Chair of the province-level people's committee or, for a city under the central government's jurisdiction, city-level people's committee (henceforth called province-level PC) evaluates the registration application and recognizes religious organizations that

operate within a province or a city under the central government’s jurisdiction. In case the decision is to deny, the reasons for the denial must be in writing.

2. Government units in charge of religion and belief matters evaluate the registration application and recognize religious organizations that operate in several provinces or cities under the central government’s jurisdiction. In case the decision is to deny, the reasons for the denial must be in writing.

**Article 19. Conditions governing the creation, division, splitting up, merging or combination of affiliated religious organizations (“affiliates”)**

1. A religious organization may form, divide, split up, merge or combined its affiliates in accordance with its charter, rules and regulations, and must conform to Section 2 of this Law.

- a. The conditions governing such activities (form, divide, separate, merge or combine affiliates) are as follows:
- b. The main religious organization must submit a written proposal;
- c. The new organization resulting from the formation, division, split-up or combination must belong to a recognized religious organization;
- d. The affiliate must satisfy the conditions stated in the charter, credo and regulations of the main religious organization;
- e. Must have a legal office;
- f. Must not violate Article 6 of this Law.

**Article 20. Authority to form, divide, split up, merge or combine affiliates**

- 1. The Chair of the province-level PC evaluates the application, decides, and responds in writing to the applying religious organization in accordance with Item 1, Article 19 of this Law. In case the decision is to deny, the reasons for the denial must be in writing.
- 2. The central-level government unit in charge of religion and belief matters evaluates the application, decides, and responds in writing to the applying religious organization that is outside the scope of Item 1, Article 19 of this Law. In case the decision is to deny, the reasons for the denial must be in writing.

**Subsection 2**

**RELIGIOUS FORMATION FACILITIES AND  
RELIGIOUS TRAINING CLASSES**

**Article 21. Conditions governing the establishment of a religious formation facility**

- 1. A religious organization may establish a religious formation facility to train religious specialists in accordance with its charter, credo or regulations, but must seek the approval of the responsible government agency.
- 2. Conditions governing the establishment of a religious formation facility:

- a. The applicant has a plan for the religious formation facility that is consistent with its scope of operation;
- b. The facility is approved by the province-level PC with jurisdiction over the location where the main office of the formation facility is to be located;
- c. The applicant has necessary facilities, equipment and financial resources;
- d. The applicant has a concrete plan covering the curriculum, the number and structure of the instructing staff, and the facility manager. The plan must show the adequacy of staffing level and staff quality.

**Article 22. Process and approval authority regarding the establishment of a religious formation facility**

1. Process of establishing a religious formation facility:
  - a. The government has the authority to issue in writing its approval of the formation facility;
  - b. The religious organization issues the decision to establish the formation facility.
2. The central-level government unit in charge of religion and belief matters evaluates the application, decides, and responds in writing to the applying religious organization on the establishment of the formation facility.
3. After one year from the date of the written approval by the central-level government unit in charge of religion and belief matters, if the religious organization has not started the process of establishing the facility, the written approval will be invalidated.
4. Religious formation facilities are not part of the national education system.

**Article 23. Notification of the operation of a religious formation facility**

1. Within 30 business days before starting operation, the representative of the formation facility must notify the central government agency that regulates religion and belief matters in writing of the following:
  - a. Decision of the religious organization to establish the formation facility;
  - b. Rules of operation and organization of the formation facility;
  - c. Curriculum and training materials, with the provision that Vietnamese history and Vietnamese law being the main subjects;
  - d. The list of names of individuals serving on the management committee, instruction staff, and as facility manager;
  - e. Estimated expenses and admissions plan;
  - f. Financial resources for the successful operation of the formation facility;
  - g. A description of the proposed measures to ensure the quality of formation.
2. Within 20 business days from the date of receipt of a valid written notification, if the central government agency in charge of religion and belief matters does not disagree on any point, the formation facility may operate according to the notification contents.



3. If the religious organization did not start operation after one year from the date of the written approval by the government, it would need to restart the notification procedure delineated in Item 1 of this article.

#### **Article 24. Admission requirements for a religious formation facility**

1. The admissions to a religious formation facility must conform to the operating regulations and admission rules that the government has reviewed.
2. Before admitting applicants, the facility's management committee must send the notice on admission criteria to the central government agency in charge of religion and belief matters. The notice shall show the number of applicants the facility plans to admit and the criteria to ensure compliance.

Within 15 business days from the date of receipt of a valid notice, if the central government agency in charge of religion and belief matters does not disagree on any point, the formation facility may admit applicants as declared in the notice.

3. Vietnamese citizens enrolling at a formation facility must meet the following requirement:
  - a. Be in good standing
  - b. Be law abiding and vetted by the commune-level PC with jurisdiction over their residences.

#### **Article 25. Enrollment of foreigners in a religious formation facility**

1. Religious formation facilities may admit foreigners.
2. Foreigners enrolled in a religious formation facility must respect Vietnamese traditions and customs, comply with entry/exit requirements and other applicable regulations, be approved by the facility's management committee who shall submit the case to the central government agency in charge of religion and belief matters for its consideration.

3. Foreigners who have completed their training must comply with the regulations in Articles 36, 58, 59 and 60 of this Law if conducting religious operations in Vietnam.

#### **Article 26. Responsibility of the government toward religious formation facilities**

1. The Ministry of Education and Training, as the lead agency, works with the Justice Ministry, the central government agency in charge of religion and belief matters, and other related organizations, to provide guidance on the curriculum and contents of instruction material, and monitors the teaching of Vietnamese history and law.
2. Province-level PCs are assigned the role of government units with jurisdiction over religious formation facilities operating within their administrative areas.
3. Province-level government units in charge of religion and belief matters are tasked with the monitoring and oversight of the operations of religious formation facilities based on operating plans that has been approved by the government units with oversight.

#### **Article 27. Religious training**

1. Religious organizations and affiliates may offer religious training sessions.

2. Province-level government units in charge of religion and belief have the authority to approve religious training.

### **Subsection 3**

## **SUSPENSION, DISSOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, AFFILIATED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION FACILITIES**

### **Article 28. Suspension of a religious organization or an affiliate**

A religious organization or an affiliate may be suspended if it deviates from the charter, rules and regulations of the religious organization that has been recognized by the government or if it violates one of the provisions in Items 4, 5, and 7 of Article 6 of this Law.

### **Article 29. Dissolution of a religious organization or an affiliate**

A religious organization may be dissolved under the following circumstances:

1. A religious organizations dissolves itself or dissolves an affiliate.
2. If a religious organization or affiliate is unable to remedy the causes that led to the suspension after the suspension period ends.

### **Article 30. Suspension of operation by a religious formation facility**

A religious formation facility's operation may be suspended if it does not comply with one of the regulations stated in Item 1, Article 23 of this Law, or it violates one of the provisions of Items 2, 4, 5, and 7 of Article 6 of this Law.

### **Article 31. Dissolution of a religious formation facility**

A religious formation facility may be dissolved under the following circumstances:

1. At the request of the religious organization.
2. It is unable to remedy the causes that led to the suspension after the suspension period ends.

## **Section V**

### **RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS**

#### **Subsection 1**

## **CONFERENCES, CONGRESS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS OR AFFILIATED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Article 32. Conferences and congresses of religious organizations or affiliates**

1. Religious organizations or affiliates may hold conferences and congresses that conform to their charters, rules and regulations after receiving approval from the responsible government agency.

## 2. Authority

- a. District-level government units in charge of religion and belief matters may approve conferences and congresses of affiliates operating within a district;
- b. Province-level government units in charge of religion and belief matters may approve conferences and congresses of affiliates operating within a province;
- c. The central-level government agency in charge of religion and belief matters may approve central-level or organization-wide conferences and congresses;
- d. The Chair of a province-level PC may approve conferences and congresses that are not covered in Items 2a through 2d of this article.

### **Article 33. Charter registration and amendment of rules and regulations**

1. A religious organization that intends to amend its charter or rules and regulations must register with the proper government authority as prescribed in Article 18 of this Law. The registration application must include the names of the religious organization and its representatives, the reasons for the amendment, and a description of the amendment. The application must include the draft amended charter, rules and regulations.
2. Within 20 business days from the receipt of a valid amendment registration, the responsible government unit must provide a written response. If case of denial, the reason for the denial must be stated in writing.

## **Subsection 2**

### **ORDINATION, PROMOTION, APPOINTMENT, ELECTION, NOMINATION, or DISMISSAL IN A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION**

#### **Article 34. Conditions governing the registration for ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination in a religious organization:**

5. Religious organizations or affiliates may ordain, promote, appoint, elect, and nominate members according to their charter, rules or regulations.
6. Conditions governing the registration of those who are promoted, nominated, appointed, or elected are as follows:
  - a. Be a Vietnamese citizen with good moral character and ethical conduct;
  - b. Be supportive of national solidarity and unity;
  - c. Be law abiding

#### **Article 35. Authority to approve registrations for ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination**

1. After the ordination, promotion, appointment, election or nomination of a member, a religious organizations must register with the proper government authority as stated in Item 4b of this article for the following religious titles:
  - a. Members of the standing committee of the Council of Evidence (Hoi Dong Chung Minh) and Executive Council (Hoi Dong Tri Su), members of the Council of Evidence

(Hoi Dong Chung Minh) and Executive Council, high venerables, most venerables, head nuns, and nuns of the Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

b. Members of the standing committee, chairs of the committees of the Vietnamese Episcopal Council, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, associate bishops, auxiliary bishops, superintendents, chair of superior ecclesiastics of Vietnam, heads of religious orders and other vowed life groups of the Catholic Church of Vietnam;

c. Members of the Central Management Committee and equivalents of Protestant organizations;

d. Members of the Governing Council, Church Council, Church Standing Committee, Phoi Su, and the higher dignitaries of Cao Dai churches;

dd. Members of the Central Administrative Council of the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church;

e. Equivalent religious ranks and titles of other religions;

g. Head of a religious formation facility

2. For cases that are not covered in Item 1 of this article, religious organizations and affiliates performing one of the listed activities, i.e., ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination, must send the registration application to the proper government agency mentioned in Item 4a of this article.

3. The registration application submitted by the religious organizations must show the full name, rank, title, scope of responsibility, religious operation experience, and a curriculum vitae certified by the appropriate commune-level PC with jurisdiction over the candidate's legal place of residence.

4. Authority:

a. The province-level government unit in charge of religious and belief must respond in writing within 15 business days from the receipt of a valid registration application for the ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination stated in Item 2 of this article. In case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing.

b. The central-level government agency in charge of religious and belief matters at must respond in writing within 20 business days from the receipt of a valid registration application for the ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination stated in Item 1 of this article. In case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing.

### **Article 36. Ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination with foreign factors**

1. The category "ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination with foreign factors" includes instances when an overseas religious organization performs one of the listed activities, i.e., ordains, promotes, appoints, elects, or nominates a candidate from a religious organization in Vietnam; or, vice-versa, instances when a religious organizations in Vietnam does the same to a foreign candidate who has been working for the religious organization in Vietnam.

2. An ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination with foreign factors must be approved in writing by the central-level government agency in charge of religious and belief matters.

3. Candidates for an ordination, promotion, appointment, election, or nomination with foreign factors must meet the requirements stated in Item 2, Article 34 of this Law. Foreigners who work for religious organizations in Vietnam must meet the following requirements to be ordained, promoted, appointed, elected, or nominated:

- a. Have been trained in a religious formation facility of a religious organization in Vietnam or have been conducting religious operations in Vietnam for at least 5 years;
- b. Comply with Vietnamese Law.

4. Religious organizations whose members are proposed to be ordained, promoted, appointed, elected, or nominated candidates by an overseas religious organization must send a written request to central-level government agency in charge of religious and belief matters. The request must state the reason for the proposed action, the candidate's full name, rank, title, scope of responsibility, and religious operation experience.

5. Vietnamese candidates ordained, promoted, appointed, elected, or nominated by an overseas religious organization may not use the new title in their religious operations in Vietnam until the central-level government agency in charge of religious and belief matters gives its approval.

### **Article 37. Reporting dismissal of clergy members or ending their function**

Religious organizations and their affiliates are required to send a report to the responsible government agency (Item 4, Article 35) all dismissals, or decisions to stop them from continuing their current duties. The report shall clearly state the reason for such actions.

## **Subsection 3**

### **TRANSFER OR RELOCATING CLERGY MEMBERS, EMPLOYEES, PEOPLE LIVING A VOWED LIFE**

#### **Article 38. Relocating clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life**

Religious organizations and their affiliates may re-assign clergy members, other employees, and people living a vowed life after receiving approval from the province-level government office in charge of beliefs and religion with jurisdiction over the location where the subjects are to be relocated.

#### **Article 39. Notice of transfer or relocation**

1. Religious organizations and their affiliates must send a notice to the province-level government office in charge of beliefs and religion with jurisdiction over the location

where the subjects are to be relocated, no later than 5 business days from the day the transfer document is issued.

2. The notice must include the names, ranks, and religious duties of the transferees, reason for the transfer, the previous work location, and the new work location of each subject.

#### **Subsection 4**

### **RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS, PROSELYTIZING, SUSPENSION OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES BY CLERGY MEMBERS, OTHER EMPLOYEES, AND PEOPLE LIVING A VOWED LIFE; RELIGIOUS EVENTS OUTSIDE OF RELIGIOUS FACILITIES**

#### **Article 40. Religious teaching and proselytizing by clergy members, other employees, monks, and nuns**

1. Clergy members, other employees, and people living a vowed life may conduct religious rites within their responsibilities; may teach religious doctrine, proselytize within religious facilities; have the obligation to instill in believers the love of country, the awareness of civil rights, the need to fulfill civic duties, and the need to abide by the law.

2. Clergy members, other employees, and people living a vowed life may teach religious doctrine, proselytize outside of religious facilities only after receiving approval from the people's committees at the appropriate level – district, town, or city within the province (from here on, this document refers to various people's committees as district-level PCs) in which the subjects intend to conduct such religious activities.

#### **Article 41. Suspension of religious activities by clergy members, other employees, and people living a vowed life**

The government may suspend religious activities of those clergy members, other employees, and people living a vowed life if they do not conform to charters, rules, and regulations governing their religious organizations that the government recognized, or violate one of the regulations per Items 2, 4, 5, and 7 of Article 6 of this Law.

#### **Article 42. Religious events outside of religious facilities**

1. Religious organizations and their affiliates must seek the approval of the district-level PC with jurisdiction over the location where a religious event is planned (if outside of religious facilities) for believers residing in a district, town, or city.

2. If expecting participants from more than a district, town, or city within a province, or participants from more than a single province or a city that is under the central government's jurisdiction, religious organizations and their affiliates must seek the approval of the province-level PC with jurisdiction over the location of the planned event.

## **Subsection 5**

### **REGISTERING PEOPLE LIVING A VOWED LIFE, REGISTERING ANNUALLY FOR RELIGIOUS OPERATIONS**

#### **BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND AFFILIATES**

#### **Article 43. Registering people living a vowed life**

1. Those who choose to live a vowed life in religious facilities can do so by their free will, without coercion, and no one may attempt to prevent them from pursuing their vocation. Minors may only do so if their parents or guardians approve.

2. Religious facility administrators must register new practitioners within 5 business days after admitting the persons, with the commune-level PC with jurisdiction over the location of the religious facility.

The registration application must include the name and biography with certification by the commune-level PC with jurisdiction over the person's original residence; and written consent by parents or guardians in case of minors.

3. Within 10 business days, the commune-level PC must issue a written response to the religious facility that submitted the registration application (provided the package meets regulations); in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing.

#### **Article 44. Annual registration for religious operations**

1. Before November 11 of each year, representatives of religious organizations and affiliates must submit registration applications for the following year's operation to the government entity specified in Item 2 of this article.

The registration application must describe operations planned for the coming year, including content, timing, duration, and location of the operations.

2. Government entities with jurisdiction

a) Commune-level PCs must issue a written response within 10 business days from the receipt of a registration application that meets regulations (from affiliates operating within a commune); in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing;

b) District-level agencies regulating beliefs and religion must issue a written response within 15 business days from the receipt of a registration application that meets regulations (from affiliates operating within a district); in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing;

c) Province-level agencies regulating beliefs and religion must issue a written response within 15 business days from the receipt of a registration application that meets

regulations (from affiliates operating within a province); in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing;

d) District-level agencies regulating beliefs and religion must issue a written response within 15 business days from the receipt of a registration application that meets regulations (from a religious organization); in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing.

**Article 45. Religious operation that deviates from the approved registration**

1. Deviations from the approved annual registration, if outside of the scope of Articles 32 or 42, or in case the content, timing, duration, or location changes from the approved registration, the affiliate must submit a description of the proposed operations to the responsible government entity identified in Item 2 of this Article.

The description must include the content, timing, duration, and location, including guarantee factors.

2. The responsible government entities specified in Item 2 of Article 44 of this Law must issue a written response to the religious organization or affiliate within 15 business days from the receipt of a registration application meeting regulations; in case of denial, the reasons must be stated in writing.

**Subsection 6**

**PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO BELIEF OR RELIGION**

**Article 46. Publications related to belief or religion**

Organizations and individuals shall abide by the law when engaging in publishing religious books, prayer books, materials on beliefs; producing materials for sale or importing/exporting cultural materials related to beliefs and religion or articles used with religious activities.

**Section VI**

**INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF RELIGIOUS**

**ORGANIZATIONS, AFFILIATES, CLERGY MEMBERS,**

**OTHER EMPLOYEES, PEOPLE LIVING A VOWED LIFE, AND BELIEVERS**

**Article 47. International activities of religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers.**



1. Religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers must conduct international activities according to charters, rules, or religious laws of the organizations, consistent with Vietnam’s law.

2. Religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers must conduct international activities in a way that respects the independence, sovereignty, and laws of the host countries.

**Article 48. Invited organizations and individuals planning to conduct international activities related to religion in Vietnam**

1. Religious organizations and affiliates not covered by Item 2 of this article must seek the approval of province-level PCs with jurisdiction over the locations where invited foreign organizations or individuals plan to conduct international activities related to religion

2. Religious organizations must seek the approval of the central government agency in charge of religion and beliefs when inviting foreign organizations or individuals to Vietnam to conduct international activities related to religion.

**Article 49. Going abroad to participate in religious operations or training**

1. Clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers may go abroad to participate in religious operations or training after receiving approval from the central government agency in charge of religion and beliefs.

2. Clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers who complete religious training abroad – should foreign religious organizations promote, appoint, elect them, or delegate duties to them – may not resume religious operation in Vietnam before the responsible religious organization registers the returning individuals with the responsible government entity as prescribed in Item 4 of Article 35 of this Law.

3. Vietnamese citizens who participate in religious operations or training abroad must exercise the rights and responsibilities of Vietnamese citizens; must not collaborate with organizations that oppose the Vietnamese government, or harm the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

**Article 50. Collaboration with international religious organizations**

Religious organizations may collaborate with international religious organizations after receiving approval from central government agency in charge of religion and beliefs.

**Section VII**

**SHARED BELIEF CENTERS, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, AFFILIATES, CLERGY MEMBERS, OTHER EMPLOYEES, PEOPLE LIVING A VOWED LIFE, AND BELIEVERS: ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, AND CHARITABLE OR HUMANITARIAN SERVICES**

**Article 51. Shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates: soliciting donations**

1. Shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates may conduct fundraising activities, accept donations made on a voluntary basis by organizations and individuals in Vietnam or abroad as prescribed by law.

2. Shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates must submit a notice to the responsible government entity as prescribed in Item 3 of this article, describing the purpose, scope, method, timing, duration, and management of the fundraising, and intended use of the donations.

The responsible government entity shall oversee the fundraising to ensure that it conforms to the notice submitted by Shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates.

3. Government's decision:

a) Unless commune-level PCs with jurisdiction over the intended fundraising location raise an issue within 5 days from their receipt of notices meeting regulations (for fundraising within a commune), shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates may proceed with the fundraising as described in the notices;

b) Unless district-level PCs with jurisdiction over the intended fundraising location raise an issue within 10 days from their receipt of notices meeting regulations (for fundraising within a district but involving more than a single commune), shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates may proceed with the fundraising as described in the notices;

c) Unless province-level PCs with jurisdiction over the intended fundraising location raise an issue within 15 days from their receipt of notices meeting regulations (for fundraising within a province but involving more than a single district), shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates may proceed with the fundraising as described in the notices.

4. Shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates engaging in fundraising must ensure financial transparency, including the disbursement of proceeds;

must not use the names of shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates as a cover for individual gains or illegal purposes (translator: “purposes” cover a broad swath of arbitrary basis for denying).

5. Donations, including those made in the facilities of shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates, must be used for the declared purposes, for religious or belief-related operations, and the good of the community.

6. Receipt, management, and use of donations from abroad are subject to pertinent regulations.

**Article 52. Activities related to education, vocational training, health care, and social services of religious organizations and affiliates**

1. Religious organizations and affiliates may conduct activities related to education, vocational training, health care, and social services as prescribed by law.

2. No one may proselytize or perform religious rites on the site of facilities used for education or vocational training established or managed by religious organizations or affiliates.

**Article 53. Charitable and humanitarian activities of shared belief centers, religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers**

1. The government encourages and enables shared belief centers, religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers to engage in charitable and humanitarian activities as prescribed by law.

2. No one may use charitable and humanitarian activities as means to conduct activities serving other purposes.

**Section VIII  
ASSETS OF SHARED BELIEF CENTERS, RELIGIOUS  
ORGANIZATIONS, AND AFFILIATES**

**Article 54. Assets of shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates**

The law protects legal assets owned by shared belief centers, religious organizations, and affiliates, and forbids any attempt to misappropriate such assets.

**Article 55. Land belonging to shared belief centers and religious facilities**

Laws governing land use apply to land belonging to shared belief centers and religious facilities.

**Article 56. Renovation, enhancement, or new construction projects related to belief, religion; auxiliary structures associated with shared belief centers and religious facilities**

1. Renovation, enhancement, or new construction affecting sites with historical and cultural values, or sites whose natural beauty have made them tourist attractions, and such sites have been classified by the appropriate government agencies: such renovation, enhancement, or new construction must conform to applicable laws and regulations.

2. Renovation, enhancement, or new construction projects affecting structures that are part of shared belief centers and religious facilities must comply with laws and regulations pertinent to facilities and detached homes in cities, centers of communes, historic preservation areas, and those with historical and cultural values.

**Article 57. Relocation of structures of religious significance**

Laws governing real property and land and other applicable laws govern the relocation of structures that are part of shared belief centers and religious facilities.

**Section IX**

**RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGNERS**

**LIVING IN VIETNAM**

**Article 58. Freedom of religion and belief for foreigners living in Vietnam**

1. The Vietnamese government respects and protects the freedom of religion and belief of foreigners who reside legally in Vietnam: they may conduct religious activities, preach, get training at facilities that train individuals for religious operations, or take religious classes offered by religious organizations in Vietnam.

2. Foreigners entering Vietnam must follow Vietnamese law; they may bring religious publications and implements for personal use as prescribed by Vietnamese law.

**Article 59. Religious activities of foreigners living in Vietnam**

1. Foreigners who reside legally in Vietnam may conduct religious activities in religious facilities or other locations permitted by law, just like Vietnamese believers.

2. Foreigners who need to conduct religious activities in religious facilities or other locations permitted by law, separately from Vietnamese believers, must seek approval by the province-level PC with jurisdiction over the area identified in the foreigners' registration for religious activities.

**Article 60. Preaching by clergy members or people living a vowed life who are foreigners**

1. Clergy members and people living a vowed life from abroad may preach in Vietnam after receiving the approval of the central-level agency in charge of religious and belief matters. Their preaching must comply with the regulations of the religious organizations in Vietnam with which they are associated, and comply with Vietnamese law.

2. Religious organizations, affiliates, and foreigners who congregate for separate religious activities in Vietnam must submit documents to the central-level agency in charge of religious and belief matters when planning to invite foreign clergy members or people living a vowed life to preach in Vietnam.

**Section X**

**THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL AND OVERSIGHT OF BELIEF-RELATED AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

**Article 61. Principle governing the government's controls and oversight**

1. The government established a single control and oversight mechanism and ensures everyone's exercise of freedom of religion and belief.

2. Organizations and individuals exercise and ensure their freedom of religion and belief according to each entity's role, responsibilities and rights as prescribed by law.

3. Organizations and individuals violating the law on religion and belief shall be punished as prescribed by law.

**Article 62. Elements of the government’s controls and oversight**

1. Develop and direct strategies, projects, long-range plans, five-year plans and annual plans to control belief and religion.

2. Issue legal documents on religion and belief.

3. Implement policy and shape legal framework related to religion and belief.

4. Disseminate laws on religion and belief.

5. Define the government’s system for controlling religion and belief

6. Direct various agencies’s interactions to implement policy on religion and belief

7. Establish programs to study issues and train government employees on religion and belief  
tôn giáo.

8. Monitor, inspect, handle complaints and denouncements, and punish violations related to religion and belief.

9. Collaborate with external entities in the realm of religion and belief.

**Article 63. Responsibilities of organizations tasked with religious and belief activities**

1. The central government is the highest authority for the control and oversight of religions and belief throughout the entire country

2. The government agency in charge of religious and belief matters is accountable to the central government with respect to the implementation of the central government’s control and oversight.

The central government specifies the authority, mission, and organization of the government agency in charge of religious and belief matters.

3. Ministries and equivalent agencies, and people’s committees at various levels work to implement the central government’s control and oversight according to each entities function and authority as prescribed by law.

## **Article 64. Responsibilities of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and its member organizations**

1. The Fatherland Front and its member organizations are tasked with:

a) Bring together citizens with beliefs or having a religious faith and citizens without such belief to achieve general solidarity among all the people, to build up and protect the nation;

b) Promptly bring the people's ideas, aspirations, petitions related to religion and belief to the attention of responsible government agencies;

c) Participate in the development of the law on religion and belief;

d) Actively spread information and enlist clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, religious adherents, people with beliefs, religious organizations, and the public in complying with the law on religion and belief;

e) Maintain oversight of the implementation of the law on religion and belief by government units, national assembly members, and government officials.

2. The Fatherland Front and social and political organizations are tasked with discussing and exchanging views on the central government's proposed policy, laws, plans, programs, aimed at economic, cultural, and social development related to religion and belief (except for matters involving national security) *trừ những vấn đề thuộc bí mật quốc gia*, according to each entity's function and mission.

3. The Fatherland Front coordinates with government agencies in disseminating, advocating for, and implementing policy and the law on religion and belief.

## **Section XI**

### **INSPECTION, RESOLUTION OF GRIEVANCES, HANDLING VIOLATIONS**

#### **Article 65. Religion and belief inspection**

1. Religion and belief inspection is inspection by responsible agencies targeting agencies, organizations, and individuals implementing the law on religion and belief.

The central-level agency in charge of religious and belief matters has the responsibility to direct and establish a national program for inspection related to religion and belief.

2. The mission of such inspectors includes:

a) Inspect the implementation of the law on religion and belief by people's committees at various levels;

b) Inspect the implementation of the law on religion and belief by shared belief centers, religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, and believers;

c) Investigate when there are signs of violation.

#### **Article 66. Resolution of complaints, litigation in the matter of religion and belief**

1. Religious organizations, affiliates, clergy members, other employees, people living a vowed life, believers, others with interests and relevant duties may file complaints or seek redress against administrative decisions or actions related to religion and belief.

2. The process and procedures for resolving complaints against administrative decisions or actions related to religion and belief shall follow the law on grievances and complaints.

3. The process and procedures for resolving complaints against administrative decisions or actions related to religion and belief shall conform to regulations stemming from the law on administrative grievances and complaints.

#### **Article 67. Resolution of denouncements of non-compliance in the matter of religion and belief**

1. Organizations and individual may denounce violations of the law on religion and belief.

2. The resolution of such denouncements shall comply with regulations related to the law on denouncements.

#### **Article 68. Handling violations**

Those who violate the law on religion and belief may be subject to administrative actions or criminal trials, depending on the severity of the violation; and, where applicable, are liable for damages as prescribed by law.



## **Section XII**

### **IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS**

#### **Article 69. Transition considerations**

1. Religious organizations currently registered, or recognized per regulations in the Ordinance on belief and religion do not need to register under this Law.

2. Religious councils, religious orders, and groups of people living a vowed life that are already registered per regulations in the Ordinance on belief and religion do not need to register under this Law.

#### **Article 70. Effective date**

This Law is effective as of .....

#### **Article 71. Details to be promulgated**

The government will promulgate details related to process and procedures under Item 1 of Article 11, Articles 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 38, 40, 41, 42, 48, 49, 50, 56, 59 and 60 of this Law.

---

*This Law was passed by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Session number...., on .....*

**CHAIR OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**