

The Universal House of Justice

3 November 1980

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

One of the greatest sources of consolation for the Universal House of Justice amid the tribulations of the past twelve years, has been the establishment and growth of the Continental Boards of Counselors, and the assistance that this institution has been rendering, in ever-increasing measure, to the sound development of the worldwide Bahá'í community. We cannot pay too high a tribute to the indefatigable labors of the devoted souls who have been called upon to shoulder this onerous responsibility, and who have followed with such fidelity the path of self-sacrificing service that has been blazed for them by the beloved Hands of the Cause of God.

In June 1979 we were moved to announce that the duration of the terms of office of Continental Counselors would be five years, to start on the Day of the Covenant of this year. As this date approaches, we have decided that the time is ripe for a further step in the development of the institution itself that will, at one and the same time, accord greater discretion and freedom of action to the Continental Boards of Counselors in the carrying out of their duties, and widen the scope of each Board to embrace an entire continent. In accordance with this decision, the zones of the Continental Boards of Counsellors will, from the Day of the Covenant of the year 137 (26 November 1980), be as follows:

1. Africa, comprising the areas of the four present zones of that continent.
2. The Americas, comprising the present zones of North, Central and South America.
3. Asia, comprising the present zones of Western, South Central and Southeastern Asia, together with the present zone of Northeastern Asia without the Hawaiian Islands and Micronesia.
4. Australasia, comprising the present zone of Australasia plus the Hawaiian Islands and Micronesia.
5. Europe.

Those who are now appointed as Counselors to serve on these Continental Boards for the next five years are:

Africa: Dr. Hushang Ahdieh (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Ḥusayn Ardekání, Mr. Friday Ekpe, Mr. Oloro Epyeru, Mr. Shidan Fat'he-Aazam, Mr. Zekrullah Kazemi, Mr. Muḥammad Kebdani, Mrs. Thelma Khelghati, Mr. William Masehla, Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Mr. Kolonario Oule, Mrs. Isobel Sabri, Dr. Mihdí Samandarí, Mr. Peter Vuyiya, Mrs. Bahíyyih Winckler.

The Americas: Dr. Hidáyatu'lláh Aḥmadíyyih, Dr. Farzam Arbáb, Mrs. Carmen de Burafato, Mr. Athos Costas, Mr. Angus Cowan, Mr. Lloyd Gardner (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Mas'úd Khamsí, Mrs. Lauretta King, Mr. Artemus Lamb, Mr. Peter McLaren, Mr. Raúl Pavón, Dr. Sarah Pereira, Mrs. Ruth Pringle, Mr. Fred Schechter, Mrs. Velma Sherrill, Mr. Donald Witzel.

Asia: Mr. Burhání'd-Dín Afshín, Mrs. Shirin Boman, Dr. Masih Farhangí, Dr. John Fozdar, Mr. Zabíhu'lláh Gulmuḥammadí, Mr. Aydin Güney, Mr. Dipchand Khianra, Mr. Rúḥu'lláh Mumtází, Mr. S. Nagaratnam, Mr. Khudáraḥm Paymán (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Manúchih Salmánpúr, Mr. Vicente Samaniego, Mrs. Zena Sorabjee, Dr. Chellie Sundram, Mr. Hideya Suzuki, Mr. Yan Kee Leong.

Australasia: Mr. Suhayl ‘Alá’í, Mr. Ben Ayala, Mr. Owen Battrick (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Richard Benson, Mrs. Tinai Hancock, Dr. Peter Khan, Mr. Lisiate Maka.

Europe: Mr. Erik Blumenthal, Mrs. Dorothy Ferraby, Dr. Agnes Ghaznavi, Mr. Hartmut Grossmann, Mr. Louis Hénuzet (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mrs. Ursula Mühlischlegel, Dr. Leo Niederreiter, Mrs. Betty Reed, Mr. Adib Taherzadeh.

A number of friends who have rendered highly valued services as Counselors are not being reappointed for the coming term, and we wish to express here our profound gratitude for the devoted labors they have rendered and are rendering in the path of the Cause. These dearly loved believers are:

Mr. Seewoosumbur-Jeehoba Appa, Dr. Iraj Ayman, Mr. Rowland Estall, Mr. Howard Harwood, Miss Violet Hoehnke, Mrs. Salisa Kermani, Mr. Paul Lucas, Miss Elena Marsella, Mr. Alfred Osborne, Miss Thelma Perks, Mr. Hádí Raḥmání, Mr. ‘Imád Sábírán, Miss Edna True.

Henceforth the Board of Counselors in each continent will have wider discretion to decide such matters as whether to divide its area into zones, and what the boundaries of such zones should be, the number and location of the Board’s offices, and the manner in which the members of the Auxiliary Boards will report to and operate under the Counselors. The principles and policies governing the operation of the Continental Boards of Counselors, however, and their relationships with the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies and the individual believers will remain unchanged. As the Bahá’í world experiences the manifold interactions of these two vital and complementary arms of the Administrative Order of Bahá’u’lláh, the unique benefits of this divinely ordained System become ever more apparent. The harmonious interaction and the proper discharge of the duties of these institutions representing the rulers and the learned among the people of Bahá is the essential basis at this time for the protection of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh and the fulfillment of its God-given mandate.

Events of the most profound significance are taking place in the world. The river of human history is flowing at a bewildering speed. Age-old institutions are collapsing. Traditional ways are being forgotten, and newly born ideologies which were fondly expected to take their place, are withering and decaying before the eyes of their disillusioned adherents. Amidst this decay and disruption, assailed from every side by the turmoil of the age, the Order of Bahá’u’lláh, unshakably founded on the Word of God, protected by the shield of the Covenant and assisted by the hosts of the Concourse on High, is rising in every part of the world.

Every institution of this divinely created Order is one more refuge for a distraught populace; every soul illumined by the light of the sacred Message is one more link in the oneness of mankind, one more servant ministering to the needs of an ailing world. Even should the Bahá’í communities, in the years immediately ahead, be cut off from the World Center or from one another—as some already have been—the Bahá’ís will neither halt nor hesitate; they will continue to pursue their objectives, guided by their Spiritual Assemblies and led by the Counselors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants. It is our prayer at the Sacred Threshold that the new and challenging development now taking place in the evolution of the institution of the Counselors will release great energies for the advancement of the Cause of God in every land.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]