

## The Universal House of Justice

27 December 1985

To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counselors

Beloved Friends,

With all the warmth of our hearts we welcome you to this historic Conference, to discuss the challenges and opportunities so swiftly devolving upon the struggling Faith of God.

The main features of this spiritually potent occasion are evident. Your entry upon your new term of office as the Seven Year Plan approaches its conclusion, with the measures to be taken to ensure its success heavy on your shoulders; consideration of the main features of the new Six Year Plan which will terminate on the eve of the Centenary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh; the golden opportunities offered by the Year of Peace, which must be seized and fully exploited; the dramatic emergence of the Faith from obscurity into the limelight of the world's highest councils, with the attendant enhancement of its status; a tremendous upsurge of zealous activity in the Bahá'í world community as it takes to its heart the recently issued Statement on Peace; the deep and universal commitment already made by that community to a vast variety of social and economic development programs; the widespread and growing awareness among the leaders of mankind that a new stage in human history has opened and that the guidance of the past will not carry it through the emergencies of the present; these, together with the invitation extended to the peoples of the world to examine the Bahá'í community as a working model for the reorganization of the world, are some of the pressures forcing themselves upon the attention of those responsible for the direction, propagation and protection of the Cause of God.

Who can doubt that we are now entering a period of unprecedented and unimaginable developments in the onward march of the Faith? Some intimation of what these may be can already be deduced and preparations made to deal with them. We know that the present victories will lead to active opposition, for which the Bahá'í world community must be prepared. We know the prime needs of the Cause at the moment: a vast expansion of its numbers and financial resources; a greater consolidation of its community life and the authority of its institutions; an observable increase in those characteristics of loving unity, stability of family life, freedom from prejudice and rectitude of conduct which must distinguish the Bahá'ís from the spiritually lost and wayward multitudes around them. Surely the time cannot be long delayed when we must deal universally with that entry by troops foretold by the Master as a prelude to mass conversion. How are we to prepare ourselves for that examination of the Bahá'í experience which will undoubtedly be made by shrewd and doubting questioners?

These are some of the subjects before you. The role of the Counselors is all-pervading and vital in the life of the Cause. You must be wise and steadfast, encouraging and brotherly in all your associations with the believers and in your consultation with National Spiritual Assemblies; through your Board members and their assistants you must strengthen and uplift the Local Spiritual Assemblies and rouse the spirits and enlarge the vision of the believers everywhere. Your prayers in the Sacred Shrines during these few days will strengthen and guide you; be assured of our own prayers for a bountiful outpouring of grace and inspiration as you embark upon the deliberations which will enable you to discharge your sacred and historic duties.

We wish you a happy, exciting and fruitful conference.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

