

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

26 December 1995

To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counselors

Beloved Friends,

With great happiness we welcome you to this momentous conference, which is graced by the presence of three Hands of the Cause of God. It marks the opening of a period of intense activity as the twentieth century, hailed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "a century of life and renewal," draws to a close, and a new century of enormous challenge for all mankind opens before us. To guide the activities of the Bahá'í world during this period, we have decided to launch a Four Year Plan at Riḍván 1996. The provisions of that Plan are to be the focus of your consultations in the coming six days.

The Continental Boards of Counselors have been an integral part of the Administrative Order for over twenty-five years. Your institution has made an essential contribution to the strengthening and evolution of the Bahá'í community, and your role in the protection and growth of the Cause will be of even greater consequence in the years ahead.

If there is any question of the speed with which history is unfolding, we need but recall the events, both within and without the Bahá'í community, which have transpired since the Counselors assembled in conference in 1985. The transformations of this remarkable first decade of the Fourth Epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith, seen in the light of the promises in our Sacred Scriptures, throw into sharp perspective the great range of the tasks before us. Can we have any doubt that events will henceforth move at a still more rapid pace and will change the world even more radically than have those of the past decade?

At this crucial point in the fortunes of humankind, your role and that of your Auxiliaries in calling forth the wholehearted endeavors of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in raising the level of their spiritual awareness, and in promoting the evolution of national and local Bahá'í institutions is of fundamental importance. In that realization we eagerly anticipate the fruits of your deliberations during the coming days. We shall offer fervent prayers at the Sacred Threshold that the confirmations of the Almighty will guide and reinforce your services both now and through the years to come.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]