

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Riḍván 153

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in Australia, the Cook Islands, the Eastern Caroline Islands, the Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, the Hawaiian Islands, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, the Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and the Western Caroline Islands

Dearly loved Friends,

You are privileged to live in a region of the world unique in the opportunities it offers to advance the interests of the Faith during the course of the Four Year Plan. You constitute Bahá'í communities within, or on the fringe of, the vast Pacific Ocean, with which is associated this promise of Bahá'u'lláh: "Should they attempt to conceal His light on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost part of the ocean and, raising His voice proclaim: 'I am the life-giver of the world.'" At a time when the dear Bahá'í friends in the Cradle of the Faith yearn for the yoke of oppression to be lifted from their shoulders, you can compensate for their present and temporary inability to propagate the Faith if you undertake a sustained endeavor to convey the Divine Message to the peoples of your countries and multiply Bahá'í institutions throughout these lands.

Within your region is to be found a vast diversity of races, cultures, languages and religious traditions, illustrative of the major influences which have shaped the affairs of humanity throughout history. One of this region's distinguishing features is described by the Guardian as "a spiritual axis, extending from the Antipodes to the northern islands of the Pacific Ocean—an axis whose northern and southern poles will act as powerful magnets, endowed with exceptional spiritual potency, and towards which other younger and less experienced communities will tend for some time to gravitate." This emphasizes the vital role to be played by the Bahá'í communities of Northeastern Asia and of the Antipodes in the spiritual illumination of the surrounding areas.

Every country of the region must witness, in the course of the Four Year Plan, a significant advance in the process of entry by troops. It is essential that the plans formulated on national and local levels reflect this vital aim. The advancement of this process will require that greater attention be given not only to fostering individual initiative in the teaching work, but also to developing human resources through the establishment and efficient operation of training institutes and other centers of learning, and to vastly increasing the strength and quality of the functioning of the Local Spiritual Assemblies.

We direct a special appeal to the indigenous believers in all parts of the Pacific region, men and women alike, to intensify their efforts to acquire a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and to strive for a position in the forefront of the promoters of the Faith through their teaching endeavors on the home front and their international cooperation in programs of the Ocean of Light. As the tensions and divisions of a declining social order increase, the believers throughout the Pacific Islands should provide compelling testimony to the potency of the Bahá'í Teachings through their manifest unity transcending tribal, national or ethnic barriers. The desperate search for solutions to the social and economic problems afflicting these countries is tempting people, in increasing numbers, to indulge in partisan political activities; the indigenous Bahá'ís should refuse to be drawn into such divisive pursuits and should strive to acquire a more profound insight into the nature of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which offers a pattern for a future society distinguished by justice and unity, far removed from the contention of competing political interests.

In many of the nations of your area, women have traditionally been restricted to a secondary role in the life of society. We call upon the Bahá'í women of these countries, assured of the support and encouragement of all elements of the Bahá'í community, to demonstrate the transforming power of this Revelation by their courage and initiative in the teaching work and their full participation in the administrative activities of the Faith.

In much of the region, insufficient attention has been given to the education of children. Far more extensive programs should be initiated in those countries where the need exists, to ensure that Bahá'í children are nurtured, encouraged to acquire trained minds, illumined with a sound knowledge of the Divine Teachings, well-equipped to participate in the work of the Cause at all levels and to contribute to the arts, crafts and sciences necessary for the advancement of civilization. Such programs, when open to all children, Bahá'í or not, offer a potent means of extending the beneficial influences of Bahá'u'lláh's Message to the wider society.

In Northeastern Asia, the progress of the Faith has been most encouraging, and a good foundation has been laid for the Bahá'ís of Japan and Korea to magnify the size of their communities substantially during the Four Year Plan, while making a notable contribution to the work of the Faith in neighboring countries. Special attention should be given to the development of the Faith in the Ryukyu Islands and also to the exploration of any opportunities which might arise to carry the healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to all parts of the Korean peninsula.

The dedication and vitality of the Bahá'í community in the Philippine Islands is a constant source of joy to us. We look to the Filipino believers to make a significant advance in the process of entry by troops during the Four Year Plan, while giving renewed attention to the strengthening of their Local Spiritual Assemblies and the development of community life. This will necessitate the intensive use of training institutes throughout the country, and the involvement of a larger number of believers in these training programs. The members of this devoted Bahá'í community provide a welcome source of manpower for the reinforcement of Bahá'í endeavors elsewhere, particularly in the Asian and Pacific regions.

We are well aware of the restrictions which have long afflicted the members of the Indonesian Bahá'í community. Their staunchness of faith, and their initiative in taking full advantage of whatever opportunities are open to them, attract our admiration and gratitude. We urge them to continue their endeavors throughout the whole of Indonesia, with full confidence that their hopes will be fulfilled in the future.

A special responsibility must rest upon the believers in Papua New Guinea, constituting the largest body of Bahá'ís in Australasia, to strive unceasingly to build a vibrant community which embraces all strata of society and which is renowned as a dynamic and enlightened segment of their nation. We look forward, in the course of the Four Year Plan, to a greater participation of the Bahá'í men and women of this country in the development of the Faith in other parts of Melanesia and elsewhere throughout the Pacific Islands.

In Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii, there are well-established and soundly functioning Bahá'í communities, each characterized by an admirable record of accomplishments on the home front and by a notable contribution to the work of the Faith in other parts of the Pacific and beyond. We call upon the believers in these countries to strive for a fuller realization of their duty to advance the interests of the Faith on the home fronts and throughout the length and breadth of the Pacific region. In their own countries, they should aspire to far greater attainments, marked by a substantial increase in the number of adherents and an enhanced public awareness of the distinctive character of the Bahá'í Faith and its followers. They can render invaluable assistance to other Bahá'í communities, not only in the Pacific region but in Southeast Asia and beyond, because of the experience they have acquired in the teaching and administrative fields and the resources to which they have access. The believers from the Pacific Islands who have taken up residence in these three countries should be mindful of the responsibilities which rest upon them

to devise means by which they can contribute to the strengthening of the Bahá'í communities in the island nations from which they have come.

Many of the valiant Bahá'í communities of the Pacific Islands are distinguished by the fact that they constitute significant percentages of the populations of their countries. The believers in these island nations need to direct their attention, more than ever, to the propagation of the Faith. They should also concentrate on the development of a distinctive community life, based on an uncompromising adherence to the precepts of the Faith, and guided by well-functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies, which will demonstrate to the entire populations of their countries the unifying and transforming power of the Faith, and will attract to the Cause a multitude of new believers. Through this effort, they can make a vital contribution to enhancing the worldwide prestige of the Faith, and can lay the foundation for even more outstanding victories in the future. We urge them to give attention to sharply increasing their level of international cooperation in pursuit of the goals of the Four Year Plan, including support of the establishment of a strong Bahá'í community in French Polynesia as a basis for the future election of a National Spiritual Assembly there.

Almost four decades have passed since Shoghi Effendi described the Pacific region in which you live as "that vast area of the globe, an area endowed with unimaginable potentialities, and which, owing to its strategic position, is bound to feel the impact of world-shaking forces, and to shape to a marked degree through the experience gained by its peoples in the school of adversity, the destinies of mankind." Since that time your nations have come ever more fully under the influence of the forces which are causing turmoil and disorder to human society, while the followers of Bahá'u'lláh have labored, undeterred and with admirable dedication, to advance the Cause of their Lord and to establish His institutions. The Pacific area, where, as the Guardian stated, "Bahá'í exploits bid fair to outshine the feats achieved in any other ocean, and indeed in every continent of the globe....," now stands at the threshold of victories far greater than any yet won. We call upon you to go forward now as never before, assured of our ardent prayers in the Holy Shrines on your behalf, confident of your ultimate triumph.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]