

The Universal House of Justice

6 August 1996

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We are greatly heartened by the news reaching us of the enthusiastic response of the friends to the Four Year Plan. Particularly encouraging are the efforts of National Spiritual Assemblies everywhere to establish training institutes and to systematically address the development of human resources. The number of national and regional institutes is rapidly increasing, and indications are that there may be more than one hundred operating in the world by the close of the first year of the Plan. We cherish the hope that from each of these centers of learning will issue forth ever-growing contingents of believers capable of carrying out a wide array of services to the Cause, creating thus in every country the capacity to sustain the process of entry by troops.

In some national communities, economic conditions are such that institutes can be financially self-supporting from the outset. But the majority of communities cannot meet the expenses associated with the operation of their training institutes. These expenses include materials for courses, teaching and office supplies, communications, maintenance of equipment, and sometimes transport of students and their food and lodging.

The most crucial item in the budgets of the institutes of many countries, however, is financial support for full- and part-time staff to coordinate training activities and to offer courses both at a central site and in the surrounding towns and villages. With this latter need in mind, we drew attention in the Riḍván message to Bahá'u'lláh's call that the believers should center their energies on the propagation of the Faith of God and to His injunction that: "Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation...." We then stated that deputizing a teacher serving an institute would be one way of fulfilling this responsibility and indicated that the friends could contribute to the Continental Bahá'í Fund, as well as the Local, National and International Funds, for this purpose.

In order to lend impetus to this vital development, we have now made a contribution of US\$300,000 to be divided among the five Continental Funds according to the circumstances in each continent. Although this contribution is but a fraction of the amount called for, it is our hope that the friends, especially those with means, will follow suit and will give adequate attention to this area of urgent need. Since financial requirements vary from country to country, the Continental Counselors will be the best source of information on the level of deputization required for various regions throughout the world. We are asking them to keep their Auxiliary Board members informed so that they can advise those who wish to contribute to this pressing worldwide enterprise.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]