

The Universal House of Justice

Department of the Secretariat

11 August 1997

To National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In our letter of 10 October 1994 conveying a paper on the external affairs strategy approved by the Universal House of Justice, we were instructed to say that the coordination of the external affairs work would be effected through close collaboration between National Spiritual Assemblies and the Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office and Office of Public Information, and we also indicated that it would take some time before these Offices would be prepared to initiate communications with you concerning the details of the plans to be pursued. Our purpose in writing to you now is to say that the United Nations Office will shortly launch its first coordinated program of diplomatic work in accordance with the strategy. The program will be concerned with human rights education. In anticipation of this initial effort, the House of Justice wishes us to convey the following.

As you know, the external affairs work falls into two main categories: diplomatic and public information. The emphasis of the United Nations Office, as distinct from that of the Office of Public Information, will be on the plans to be executed by your Assemblies towards building effective relations with your governments and influencing official attitudes and policies on matters of global, rather than of strictly national, importance. The efforts thus required necessitate the exercise of skills and approaches similar to those employed in the campaign to defend our persecuted coreligionists in Iran and other countries. The obvious difference with the external affairs strategy is that your concentration will be on promoting the interests of society as a whole and not on calling attention to a need to assist the Bahá'í community.

Important as is the external affairs work, occupation with it must not be allowed to detract from the major aim of the Four Year Plan: namely, to advance the process of entry by troops. The House of Justice has already encouraged you to devise channels through which you may carry out this work—either by the formation of committees, the setting up of offices, the assignment of tasks to capable individuals, or some combination of these. Since the activities involved are not of a kind that can be undertaken by members of the community in general, but must be engaged in by a relatively few individuals of the proper aptitude, stature and means, you can fulfill the diplomatic requirements of the external affairs strategy without diverting attention from the teaching work. Training will no doubt have to be given to some of the individuals you appoint; this is a matter about which the United Nations Office will advise you as necessary.

A number of you have already made significant advances in this special field, and the House of Justice confidently and with great anticipation looks forward to the progress to be attained as you enter into a new phase of collaboration with the Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat