

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

3 May 1998

To the Conference of the Continental Counselors

Beloved Friends,

It has been barely two years and four months since you came together here at the outset of your current term of service. In our message to your conference at that time, we described in detail not only the purpose and structure of the Four Year Plan but the form in which it would have to be pursued if it was to realize its ambitious aim. You were then given the mandate to go forth and prepare the Bahá'í world to take on the challenges that lay ahead.

The extraordinary events of the Convention we have all just witnessed bear eloquent testimony to the ardor and effectiveness of your response. All of the institutions of the Faith have most certainly played their parts in moving our beloved Cause a giant step forward in this brief period. The clarity and vigor with which the National Spiritual Assemblies are addressing the tasks of the Plan reflect that dramatic advance in maturity that the Guardian encouraged us to expect in these closing years of the century. We feel compelled, however, to pay special tribute to the selfless, inspiring and intelligent contributions which you have made to this collective enterprise. Your work has brought honor to your institution and immense joy to our hearts.

As a result of your unceasing activity during the months immediately following the conference, the Bahá'í world had been made ready, by the time it received our Ridván 1996 message, to enter into intensive detailed planning. And once national plans were formulated your efforts did not slacken; with equal vigor you and your auxiliaries galvanized the believers into systematic action and helped them to remain focused on the central aim of the Plan. We hope that you will convey to your Auxiliary Board members and their assistants our heartfelt gratitude.

The challenge which now faces the Bahá'í world is to take advantage of the momentum thus achieved. It has within its grasp the opportunity to multiply its human resources on a scale far beyond anything heretofore attained. Every measure must be taken to ensure that this possibility becomes a reality. Training must be offered widely, to contingents of newly enrolled and veteran believers alike. It is also imperative that the energies being generated and the skills being developed through training institute programs be channelled to serve directly the needs of the Plan. In short—without any delay—the work should move to the higher tempo that recent accomplishments make possible.

Your consultations this week need to be eminently practical. You come to them with a wealth of experience that the Bahá'í community has never before enjoyed. You are well aware of the diverse strengths of the communities you serve and of the efficacy of the methods being employed in the field. The lessons of these past two years need to be examined and correlated, and their implications for advancing the process of entry by troops must be understood. In this context, you will also have to consider the increased capacity of your own institution, the work of the Auxiliary Board members, and your interaction with them, with Spiritual Assemblies, and with the International Teaching Centre, whose concern it is to reinforce your efforts with advice, perspectives and resources.

Dear friends! You represent an army of able and highly motivated servants of the Cause throughout the world. Yours is an institution which, in one respect, has a particularly intimate relationship with the Universal House of Justice; in another, it is able to exercise an influence that penetrates the very grass roots of the community. Its nature fits it, uniquely, to serve as a river of

encouragement, example and love whose waters can refresh and invigorate the spirit of every believer they touch.

We will follow your consultations this week with the heightened hope and confidence which your impressive achievements to date have awakened. For your part, be sure of our ardent prayers that Bahá'u'lláh will bless your deliberations and confirm your efforts to help bring about the massive increase in resources which the mission of our beloved Cause so urgently requires.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]