

The Universal House of Justice

10 June 1998

The International Teaching Centre

Beloved Friends,

Twenty-five years have passed since the establishment of the International Teaching Centre, during which time its structure, including that of the institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors, has been steadily consolidated. The Counselors and their auxiliaries have assumed their responsibilities for the protection and the propagation of the Faith with increasing vigor. Their role in the advancement of the Cause, whether through contacts with the individual believers or consultations with Assemblies, has been crucial, and the animating influence of their institution can now be felt in every area of Bahá'í endeavor. The contributions they are making to the execution of the Four Year Plan are ample evidence of the maturation taking place. This impressive record stands as a testimony to the diligence and wisdom with which the Teaching Center has guided their efforts.

The enclosed overview of the duties assigned to your institution, expressed in broad terms, will provide the general framework for your operations. The focus of your work will, of course, be determined by the specific requirements of the Faith at any given period in its development.

In the matter of protection, the current procedures for determining the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-breakers remain unchanged, and you will continue to exercise the responsibility for evaluating the reports of the Counselors and submitting your decision in each case to us for our consideration and approval before it is announced.

In recent years, opposition to the Cause has taken forms unfamiliar to the Bahá'í community, and this poses new challenges to your institution. You will have to take measures to help the Counselors to develop, in collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies, the ability to detect these subtle attacks and to counter their negative influence. In this connection, their efforts to encourage promising young scholars and promote within the Bahá'í community an appropriate appreciation of intellectual attainment will represent yet another invaluable service to the Cause.

In the field of propagation, during the first two years of this term, you need to center your energies on the prosecution of the Four Year Plan. This is a decisive moment in the history of the world and in the fortunes of the Faith, and it is apparent that the Bahá'í community has become endowed with a new strength. The Bahá'ís of the world have their eyes fixed on one single aim. In order to significantly advance the process of entry by troops, they have been asked to concentrate on the discharge of two immediate tasks: to multiply the human resources of the Cause on an unprecedented scale and, in ever-increasing numbers, to devote themselves to teaching. Since the commencement of the Plan, the friends everywhere have been laboring assiduously, acquiring the powers needed to accomplish these tasks. Through the imaginative use of the means at your disposal, you will be able to reinforce their exertions and ensure that they forge ahead with vision and resolve.

To this end, it will be important for the Teaching Center to keep careful watch over the progress being made worldwide, analyzing the situation of the Faith region by region and, if necessary, in specific countries. In this way, you can determine the extent to which the capacity of each national community to promote the process of entry by troops is being developed and exercised. You will be able to identify specific needs, for example, in the strengthening of institutes, in the implementation of teaching projects, and in the production and distribution of literature, and to respond to them by making recommendations to us, offering advice to the Counselors, deploying pioneers and traveling teachers, and disbursing financial resources.

Throughout the world, evidences multiply of a new energy at work in the life of the Cause. You have every reason to feel confident of the ability of your institution to help the friends seize the extraordinary possibilities thus opening before them. Be sure of our ardent prayers that Bahá'u'lláh will confirm you in this great endeavor.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

OVERVIEW OF DUTIES EXERCISED BY THE INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CENTER UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

- To exercise full responsibility for coordinating, stimulating and directing the Continental Boards of Counselors, acting also as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice.
- To be fully informed of the situation of the Cause in all parts of the world and, from this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counselors.
- To watch over the security and ensure the protection of the Faith of God. To investigate all cases of incipient Covenant-breaking, employing, as necessary, the services of the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries. To evaluate the reports rendered by the Continental Counselors and to decide whether the offender should be expelled from the Cause, submitting the decision to the Universal House of Justice for its consideration, consultation with the Hands of the Cause of God, and approval before an announcement is made. To follow a similar procedure for the reinstatement of a contrite Covenant-breaker.
- To be attentive to the spiritual health of the Bahá'í community, strengthening the believers to resist the influence of both internal and external enemies and ensuring, to this end, that the Continental Counselors assist National and Local Spiritual Assemblies in dealing with questions that cast doubt on the integrity of the Faith and its teachings.
- To be alert to possibilities for the expansion of the Faith, the consolidation of its institutions and the development of Bahá'í community life, analyzing such possibilities in the context of global plans, fostering consultation among the believers and their institutions on the nature and methods of sustained processes of growth, anticipating needs worldwide, and ensuring that the necessary resources become available to national communities. To give particular attention to the development of human resources, helping national communities increase their capacity to endow growing contingents of believers with spiritual insights, knowledge of the Faith, and skills and abilities of service.
- To administer a budget provided from the Bahá'í International Fund, allocating therefrom monies for the development of institutes, the implementation of various types of teaching projects, and the production and distribution of literature and audiovisual materials, as well as the operations of the Continental Boards of Counselors. To also administer the expenditure of the International Deputization Fund and to see to it that pioneers and traveling teachers are deployed in areas of need, with the help of the Continental Pioneer Committees, whose work it directs.

