

The Universal House of Justice

2 July 1998

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dearly loved Friends,

Twenty-five years have now elapsed since the establishment of the International Teaching Centre announced in our message of 5 June 1973. These years have seen the progressive unfoldment of the duties of this cardinal institution of the Cause of God, and the development of its close interaction with the Universal House of Justice on the one hand and the Continental Boards of Counselors on the other. During the five years just completed, it exercised increased responsibility in relation to the protection of the Faith. It stimulated pioneering and travel-teaching, as well as the production and distribution of literature and audiovisual aids and, after the launching of the Four Year Plan, it imparted a fundamental impetus to the establishment and sound functioning of training institutes. Suffusing all these activities has been its continuous interaction with the Continental Boards of Counselors, through whom its influence and encouragement have reached all levels and every area of the Bahá'í world community.

On 23 May 1998 the International Teaching Centre entered upon a five-year period full of promise for the speedy advancement of the process of entry by troops into the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. On the morning of Saturday 13 June, the newly appointed members having arrived from their far-flung homelands, all the Counselor members of the Teaching Center met in Bahjí with the Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and 'Alí Akbar Furútan, and the members of the Universal House of Justice, for prayer at the Sacred Threshold of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. There followed a week of intense consultation and preparation for the next phase of their work, focused on the prosecution of the second half of the Four Year Plan.

It is our ardent prayer in the Holy Shrines that as the edifices which are the Seats of the Institutions of the Faith at its World Center rise before the public gaze on the slope of Mount Carmel, and the influence of the institutions of its Administrative Order becomes more potent in every land, so the ears of mankind will become attuned to the glorious Message which the devoted followers of Bahá'u'lláh are proclaiming and, on every side, the spiritually thirsty masses will rally to His Banner.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]