

## The Universal House of Justice

1 September 2017

To the Friends Gathered in Battambang, Cambodia, for the Dedication of the House of Worship

Dearly loved Friends,

A full year has yet to pass since the Bahá'í world marked the completion of the last of the continental Houses of Worship, and already a new dawn is breaking in the development of the institution of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. You are gathered at the very dawning-place itself—the site of the first local House of Worship to rise above the horizon in the stage that has now opened. The dedication of this unique edifice is a historic occasion, prefiguring the appearance of many more local as well as national *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs*, in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's commandment revealed in His Most Holy Book: “Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions.”

It is fitting that this special moment is celebrated in a region that has a long and proud association with the Faith, for even within the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh His message had reached as far as Asia's south-eastern peninsula. It was a message that summoned all peoples to work for unity and peace, and its urgency has only intensified in the intervening years. Does not disunity fuel the crises and conflicts that afflict the world? Does it not exacerbate the pain and hardship experienced by so many? God be praised that the pure-hearted people of Cambodia, who have themselves suffered much, are responding with such enthusiasm to the call of the Ancient Beauty. Drawing on the power of unity, they are making strenuous efforts to uplift souls through spiritual and material education and are enabling populations to develop their capacity for service. Indeed, the believers in Cambodia are among those on the frontiers of learning in the Bahá'í world's efforts to build communities on enduring foundations.

The emergence of a House of Worship in Battambang, then, is a testament to how brightly the light of faith shines in the hearts of the friends there. Its design, the work of an accomplished Cambodian architect, reflects the grace and beauty of that nation's culture; it uses innovative techniques but blends them with forms traditional to the region; it unquestionably belongs to the land from which it has risen. Even before its dedication, the Temple has succeeded in elevating the consciousness of those who reside in its shadow about a theme that is integral to the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*—the inseparability of worship and service in the life of a community. It has fostered a greater appreciation of the importance of unity, now reinforced through the collective worship that will occur within its walls. Its emergence is a spur to the efforts being made to nurture communities of spiritual distinction. It is an edifice of noble purpose, erected by a people of noble spirit.

Now that this Temple is opening its doors to the inhabitants of Battambang and to those living far beyond, may the blessings of heaven be attracted to this region in even more abundance than before—we entreat Bahá'u'lláh that it be so. May those who pass through its portals feel their spirits soar within, may their worship of the one true God strengthen the bonds of affection between them, and may their love for God be expressed through the service they render to those around them. We call to mind at this moment the benediction of Bahá'u'lláh: “Blessed are they that occupy themselves in the House of Worship with the remembrance of Him Who is the Lord of the righteous! Blessed are they that arise in the service of this House! Blessed are they that have raised up this House!”

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

