

## THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Riḍván 2026

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

Now begins the second, greater phase of the Nine Year Plan. We see the global Bahá'í community advancing in unison, justly confident in the course it has set. Its clarity and conviction are unmistakable. Undaunted by the world's swelling turmoil, it is focused on its sacred mission. We rejoice in particular to see newly confirmed believers eagerly taking their place in the field of service and action alongside those long confirmed in the Faith. Third milestone clusters are proving to be fertile ground for rich experience to be harvested and propagated. And we have been pleased to see the friends everywhere reflecting on the message we addressed to the Counsellors who assembled here in December and drawing on its contents as they plan and act.

This purposeful spirit has been especially evident in the institutional meetings that have been convened around the world. Again and again, the accounts of these gatherings have reported the same phenomenon: a profound, insightful conversation based on direct experience of building vibrant communities rather than on assumptions or theory. This conversation is animated by the ongoing process of learning in each place. It is imbued with a deeper recognition of the significance of the Bahá'í community's endeavours and the implications they hold for a troubled world in desperate need of direction. A sense of responsibility and resolve is widely felt, and there is an acute awareness of the scale of the task at hand. Often, this conversation opens up an additional, complementary perspective which recognizes the efforts of communities and individuals not simply as the pursuit of programmes and projects, but as the cultivation of a way of life patterned on the divine teachings—a shaping of actions, interactions, and aspirations.

This same earnest conversation, reflecting a commitment to learning, is being advanced across the community from the national and regional levels all the way to the village and neighbourhood, and in a variety of settings, including meetings arranged by the institutions as well as other spaces that are emerging. It will surely be a feature of National Conventions too. We look forward to seeing patterns of individual and collective action being strengthened and expanded as this conversation unfolds. As always, it is a conversation which should be extended to ever-widening circles of friends, neighbours, and other like-minded souls who identify with efforts to bring about spiritual and material progress founded on the oneness of humankind. The spaces being created for broadening this conversation—whether they are spontaneous or planned long in advance—are an indication of a deepening involvement with society, and we hope they will become more and more common.

Many in the wider society who encounter the grassroots activity of Bahá'ís are struck by its distinctive characteristics: it springs from a sincere concern for the well-being of all, it is oriented towards unity and service, and it follows clear principles yet does not presume to have an immediate answer to every problem. In a spirit of common endeavour, Bahá'ís seek to collaborate with others and to learn together; and in the relationships they form with those who occupy positions of authority and responsibility in society, they are earnest and clear-sighted. They pursue social change without political ambition or self-interest, and they recognize that, as the prominence of the Faith rises, it becomes important to ensure that its true character and aims are well understood. In many places, the growing depth of the community's interactions with society means, inevitably, that there are new situations to navigate and new questions to answer, and this is compelling the community to further develop its own capabilities.

As we explained in our message to the recent Counsellors' Conference, a significant development over the last four years has been the emergence of the community as a more

conspicuous protagonist of the Plan, organizing itself in order to meet particular needs and advance particular fields of endeavour, to provide mutual support through collaborative arrangements, and to learn to be increasingly effective within an evolving framework for action. A striking example of this is groups of youth, working together in a locality and encouraging the participation of their peers. Naturally, their efforts benefit tremendously from the loving encouragement and guidance of the institutions, but the youth have also shown their ability to take initiative and identify fruitful avenues of service. All too often, their endeavours are occurring against a backdrop of conflict and disorder, economic inequity, and deep social divisions. We recognize the challenges the youth face in such conditions, and we commend them for resisting the impulse to criticize and condemn, finding instead constructive ways to steer around these imposing obstacles and work towards ultimately overcoming them.

Beloved friends, however turbulent the times, we urge you not to be apprehensive or disheartened. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá counsels us all to rely on the bounties of God, and so to be “ever hopeful”, to be “firm” in our hope, and to be “the cause of hope to the despairing soul”. When the world’s horizons darken, hope becomes a scarce and precious resource—but one with which the community of the Greatest Name has been richly blessed because of its conviction about the future of humanity and because of what it has learned from its own experience. Multitudes yearn for the hope you can bring to their hearts.

For a golden example of a community that has long sheltered the flame of hope, we look to the wronged yet ever-patient, ever-steadfast, ever-resilient followers of Bahá’u’lláh in the Cradle of His Faith. See how disciplined they have remained, how committed to principle over decades of unrelenting oppression—and how resolved they have been to learn from the advances made by their fellow believers in other lands, how determined to serve and console their fellow citizens in their own land. To so many of their compatriots they have been, and continue to be, a beacon of hope, a fount of compassion and insight, and trusted companions on the path of service. In recent weeks and months, these friends whom we cherish so dearly have been a constant presence in our thoughts and the repeated subject of our prayers, as we are sure they have been of yours, asking the Ever-Loving Lord to hold them in the embrace of His tender care.

Your own endeavours to advance the Cause of God are no less the focus of the supplications we offer at the Sacred Threshold—especially now, at the commencement of the new phase in the Nine Year Plan. As often as we repair to the Holy Shrines, we implore divine aid and assistance for your efforts, and beseech fortitude and strength for you in your labours. May you be swift to act and eager to learn, and may all the blessings of the celestial kingdom be yours.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]