

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

3 January 2022

To the Auxiliary Board members throughout the world

Dearly loved Friends,

On this day that we had awaited with so much anticipation to welcome you all in the Holy Land for a joint conference with the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, we feel moved to write to you and express our sadness that, owing to world conditions, this longed-for gathering could not take place. The sentiments that we had hoped to express to you in person must now be conveyed from afar. But distance does not diminish the intensity of the love we have for each one of you.

It is one hundred years to the day since the first public reading of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In that precious Document, He set out the obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God, for whose support the Auxiliary Boards for Propagation and Protection were originally created. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summoned the Hands of the Cause “to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things.” Reading these words at this time evokes for us the service that each of you are carrying out across the Bahá’í world. Indeed, the worldwide Bahá’í community owes a debt of gratitude to the entire institution of the Counsellors, including all those who have served as Continental Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members, and assistants in years gone by. Without such devoted service from so many, the marvellous advances made in recent decades, which are evident in the world today, could not have occurred. And an indispensable contribution to that progress has been the guidance and encouragement provided by the International Teaching Centre: an institution agile and perspicacious, and wholly indefatigable.

By now you have had the opportunity to become acquainted with the provisions of the Nine Year Plan and to ponder its implications. As will be apparent, the range of fields in which the believers are being asked to serve within their clusters, in order to release the society-building power of the Faith in ever-greater measures, has broadened. Correspondingly, the range of matters to which you must give serious attention has broadened as well. Your efforts are integral to the work of developing capacity to contribute to the Bahá’í community’s various areas of endeavour, and your efforts are just as integral to helping the friends demonstrate in action the capacity they have acquired. In attending to both of these needs, and more generally in fulfilling your responsibilities for education and the improvement of character, you of course rely a great deal on the efficacy of the institute process. Ever since its creation, the institute has been an essential instrument for your work, and equally, your energetic support has been essential to its development. It brings us much joy, then, to see the pronounced, earnest spirit of collaboration that characterizes your relationship with all those responsible for coordinating the institute’s endeavours.

You have no doubt read the description we presented, in our message to the Counsellors a few days ago, of how you must help the friends to find a fitting response to each of the many challenges they encounter in their pursuit of the Plan. In this regard, we feel sure you are conscious that, however beneficial the influence of your counsel, the influence of your example will be greater still. A notable strength of your office is that it connects the believers with the different levels of Bahá’í administration and reinforces the spirit of cooperation that binds them together. You have a vital duty to help raise consciousness of the purpose of Bahá’í administration and to assist with the establishment and proper functioning of new Local Spiritual Assemblies. You keep the friends connected with the plans and projects of Bahá’í institutions operating at the

local, regional, and national levels. Ultimately, you strengthen the connection between the friends and the Universal House of Justice by encouraging and leading the study of messages as they emerge. The believers look to you for a sound understanding of the Plan and for a courageous example of how to put its provisions into effect, especially in teaching the Faith. Your strong familiarity with the reality of circumstances in various clusters, combined with your thorough grasp of what is required for the Cause to advance, puts you in an ideal position to make thoughtful, creative, and timely contributions to consultations about how to release the society-building power of the Faith in every setting.

In addition to the foregoing, we wish to draw attention to your special role in encouraging the youth. So many youth who are now winning victories for the Cause were inspired by an Auxiliary Board member or assistant whose enthusiastic support and spirit of devotion taught them to rely on the power of divine confirmations and boldly enter the arena of service. Your responsibilities extend even further to the promotion of the education of children and junior youth, to the upliftment of the young, and to the strengthening of a pattern of family life that will produce generation after generation of consecrated souls, faithful followers of Bahá'u'lláh who have chosen the betterment of the world over the advancement of personal interests. The youth who, in the final year of the Nine Year Plan, will be carrying out acts of service to ensure its ultimate success are in many cases the children who, today, need to be nurtured in their love of the Blessed Beauty and their understanding of His mission.

Beloved friends, in your moments of prayer, be assured that all your entreaties to Bahá'u'lláh are accompanied by our own supplications in the Holy Shrines on your behalf. May your movement and your stillness be guided by the gentle winds of His Will, and may He bestow upon you the enduring bounty of being enabled to serve Him in accordance with His wish.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]