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6 **Riḍván 2022**

7 **To the Bahá'ís of the World**

8 Dearly loved Friends, A year of preparation and reflection, as well as of great exertion, has concluded,
9 distinguished by the efforts of the friends worldwide to mark the centenary of the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-
10 Bahá, including by sending representatives to participate in a special event honouring Him in the Holy
11 Land.

12 **Through these efforts, the inspiration offered by the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has**
13 **been felt by countless souls and not only Bahá'ís.**

- 14 • His **concern** for every member of the human family,
- 15 • His **teaching work**,
- 16 • His **promotion** of undertakings for education and social well-being,
- 17 • His **profound contributions** to discourses in both the East and the West,
- 18 • His **heartfelt encouragement** of projects to construct Houses of Worship,
- 19 • His **shaping of early forms of Bahá'í administration**,
- 20 • His **cultivation** of varied aspects of community life—all these complementary facets of
- 21 • His **life were a reflection** of His constant and complete dedication to serving God and serving
22 humanity.

23 **Beyond being a**

- 24 • **towering figure of moral authority** and
- 25 • **surpassing spiritual insight**, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a
- 26 • **pure channel** through which the forces released by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh could act
27 upon the world.

28 *To comprehend the **society-building power** possessed by the Faith,*
29 *one need look no further than the achievements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*
30 *during His ministry and the transformative effects of the guidance*
31 *that flowed unceasingly from His pen.*

32 **So many of the marvellous advances made by the present-day Bahá'í**
33 **community—which were surveyed in our message to you last Riḍván—trace**
34 **their origins to the *actions, decisions, and directions* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.**

35 **How fitting, then, that the Bahá'í community's collective tribute to its perfect**
36 **Exemplar should form the *prelude to its commencement of a major undertaking***
37 ***focused on the release of the society-building power of the Faith in ever-greater***
38 ***measures.***

- 39 1. The areas of endeavour that fall within the scope of the Nine Year Plan, and of the current series
40 of Plans, *are directed towards the fulfilment of this overarching objective.*
- 41 2. It is also *the focus of the more than 10,000 conferences being held across the globe* to mark the
42 launch of this great spiritual enterprise.
- 43 3. These conferences, *expected to welcome unprecedented numbers of participants*, are bringing
44 together not only Bahá'ís but many other well-wishers of humanity who share with them a
45 longing to foster unity and better the world.
- 46 4. Their determination and strong sense of purpose are reflected in the spirit generated at the
47 gatherings that have already occurred, where the participants have been *galvanized as much by*
48 *the dynamic consultations to which they have contributed as by the collective vision explored*
49 *at these joyful events.* We look with eager anticipation to what the coming months and years
50 will bring.

51 Since we addressed our 30 December 2021 message to the Counsellors' Conference, National Spiritual
52 Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils have been earnestly assessing the possibilities for intensifying
53 the process of growth in the clusters within their jurisdiction during the Nine Year Plan.

54 *We feel it would be helpful, for the purpose of gauging the*
55 *progress made over time, to view the Plan as unfolding in two*
56 *phases of four and five years' duration, and National Assemblies*
57 *were invited to consider the advances they expect to see in their*
58 *respective communities by **Riḍván 2026** and then by **Riḍván 2031.***

59 This exercise also involved a re-evaluation of cluster boundaries, and the outcome of these adjustments
60 is that **the total number of clusters in the world has risen by a quarter and now stands at over 22,000.**

61 **Judging by the forecasts received, it is estimated that, by the end of the Plan,**

- 62 • a programme of growth at *some level of development will exist in around 14,000* of these
63 clusters.
- 64 • From among them, the number where the programme of growth could be considered *intensive*
65 *is projected to climb to 11,000* over the same time period.
- 66 • And of these, it is anticipated that the number of clusters where *the third milestone has been*
67 *passed will rise above 5,000 by 2031.*

68 *Without question, to make such advances will entail*
69 *colossal effort over the entire duration of the Plan. Yet we*
70 *find these to be worthy aspirations towards which to*
71 *strive, for they represent an ambitious but serious*
72 *appraisal of what lies within reach.*

73 **This is telling. Such objectives could not be realistically contemplated if**

- 74 • *administrative institutions and agencies had not evolved markedly,*
- 75 • *endowing them with significantly heightened capacity to manage the affairs of a*
76 *community*
- 77 • *whose activities have multiplied so quickly,*
- 78 • *embracing a vast and growing number of kindred souls.*

79 **It would not be possible to aspire to such growth if a desire**

- 80 • to *learn*—
- 81 • to *act*,
- 82 • to *reflect*,
- 83 • to *capture insights*, and
- 84 • to *absorb the insights* emerging elsewhere—

85 **had not been cultivated at all levels, extending to the grassroots of the community.**

86 **And the effort implied by such projections would hardly be feasible if a systematic approach**
87 **to the teaching work and to human resource development had not become increasingly**
88 **manifest in the Bahá'í world.**

89 **All this has brought about an advance in the Bahá'í community's awareness of**
90 **its own**

- 91 • *identity* and
- 92 • *purpose.*

93 *A determination to be outward-looking in the process of*
94 *community building had already become an established*
95 *aspect of culture in many, many places;*

96 **it has now blossomed, in a rising number of communities, into a sense of real**
97 **responsibility for the *spiritual* and *material* progress of larger and larger groups**
98 **within society, well beyond the membership of the Bahá'í community itself.**

99 **The efforts of the friends**

- 100 1. to ***build*** communities,
- 101 2. to ***engage*** in social action, and
- 102 3. to ***contribute*** to the prevalent discourses of society have
 - 103 a. ***cohered*** into one global enterprise,
 - 104 b. ***bound together*** by a common framework for action,
 - 105 c. ***focused*** on helping humanity
- 106 4. to ***establish*** its affairs on a foundation of spiritual principles.

107 **The significance of the developments we have described, reaching this point**
108 **one hundred years after the inauguration of the Administrative Order, cannot**
109 **be overlooked.**

110 *In the extraordinary rise in capacity that has occurred in the last*
111 *two decades—**and which has made it possible for the Bahá'í***
112 ***world to view its endeavours in terms of the release of the***
113 ***society-building power of the Faith—we see incontrovertible***
114 ***evidence that the Cause of God has entered the sixth epoch of its***
115 ***Formative Age.***

116 **We announced last Ridván that the widespread phenomenon of large numbers**

- 117 • ***participating*** in Bahá'í activities,
- 118 • ***being kindled*** by faith, and
- 119 • ***acquiring the skills and abilities*** to serve their communities

120 **signalled that the third epoch of the Master's Divine Plan had commenced;**

121 thus, the One Year Plan, at its inception then and at its conclusion now, has come to mark a set of
122 historic advances made by the company of the faithful. And at the threshold of a new, mighty
123 undertaking, this united body of believers stands ready to seize the possibilities wide open before it.

124 **A prominent feature of the epoch that now ends was**

- 125 • ***the erection of the last of the continental Houses of Worship*** and
- 126 • ***the initiation of projects to establish Houses of Worship at the national and local levels.***

127 Much has been learned, by Bahá'ís the world over, about the concept of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and the
128 **union of worship and service it embodies.**

129 **During the sixth epoch of the Formative Age, much more will be learned about**

- 130 • the **path** that leads from the development within a community of a flourishing devotional
131 life—and
- 132 • the **service** which it inspires—
- 133 • to the **appearance** of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

134 *Consultations are beginning with various National Spiritual*
135 *Assemblies, and as these proceed, we will periodically*
136 *announce places where a Bahá'í House of Worship will be*
137 *raised up in the coming years.*

138 Our **joy** at seeing the community of the Greatest Name go from strength to strength is tempered by our
139 **deep sorrow** at seeing the persistence of conditions and conflicts in the world that create misery and
140 desperate suffering—in particular, at **observing the recrudescence of destructive forces**
141 **that have disordered international affairs while visiting horrors upon**
142 **populations.**

143 *We know well and are reassured that, as Bahá'í*
144 *communities have repeatedly demonstrated in many*
145 *different contexts, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are*
146 *committed to offering relief and support to those around*
147 *them, no matter how straitened their own circumstances.*
148 *But until humanity as a whole undertakes to establish its*
149 *affairs on foundations of justice and truth, it is, alas, fated*
150 *to stagger from one crisis to another.*

151 **We pray that, if the recent outbreak of war in Europe is to yield any lessons for**
152 **the future, it will serve as an urgent reminder of the course that the world must**
153 **take if it is to attain genuine and enduring peace.**

154 **The principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh to the monarchs and presidents of His**
155 **time, and the weighty responsibilities with which He charged rulers past and**
156 **present, are perhaps even more pertinent and imperative today than when they**
157 **were first recorded by His Pen.**

158

159 *For Bahá'ís, the inexorable advance of the Major Plan of*
160 *God—**bringing with it ordeals and upheavals, but***
161 ***ultimately impelling humanity towards justice, peace,***
162 ***and unity**—is the context within which the Minor Plan of*
163 *God, with which the believers are chiefly occupied, unfolds.*
164 ***The dysfunctional state of present-day society makes the***
165 ***need for the release of the society-building power of the***
166 ***Faith abundantly clear and pressing. We cannot but***
167 ***expect that, for now, convulsions and disturbances will***
168 ***continue to afflict the world;***

169 **you will no doubt appreciate, then, why every earnest supplication we offer for**
170 **all God's children to be relieved from bewilderment and bitter hardship is**
171 **coupled with an equally heartfelt prayer for the success of the much-needed**
172 **service you are rendering for the Cause of the Prince of Peace.**

173 **In every cluster where the activities of the Plan are gaining momentum, we see**
174 **the development of communities with the noble characteristics we described in**
175 **the 30 December 2021 message.**

176 **As societies experience stresses of various kinds, the followers of the Abhá**
177 **Beauty must stand out more and more for their qualities**

- 178 • of **resilience**
- 179 • **and rationality,**
- 180 • for their standard of **conduct** and
- 181 • their **adherence to principle,** and
- 182 • for the **compassion,**
- 183 • **detachment,** and
- 184 • **forbearance** they demonstrate **in their pursuit of unity.**

185 Time and again, the distinctive characteristics and attitudes shown by the believers in periods
186 of acute difficulty have prompted people to turn to Bahá'ís for

- 187 • *explanation,*
- 188 • *counsel,* and
- 189 • *support,*

190 especially when the life of a society has been upset by peril and unforeseen disruptions.

191 *In sharing these observations, we are mindful that the Bahá'í*
192 *community itself also experiences the effects of the forces of*
193 *disintegration at work in the world. Moreover, we are conscious*
194 *that the greater the friends' efforts to promote the Word of God,*
195 *the stronger the countervailing forces they will encounter, sooner*
196 *or later, from various quarters. They must fortify their minds and*
197 *spirits against the tests that are sure to come, lest these impair*
198 *the integrity of their endeavours.*

199 **But the believers know that whatever storms lie ahead, the ark of the**
200 **Cause is equal to them all.**

201 Successive stages of its voyage have seen it weather the elements and ride the waves. Now it is bound
202 for a new horizon. The confirmations of the Almighty are the gusts that fill its sails and propel it towards
203 its destination.

204 ***And the Covenant is its lodestar, keeping the sacred***
205 ***vessel set on its sure and certain course.***

206 May the hosts of heaven send blessings upon all who sail within.

207 *The Universal House of Justice*
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212 *original without formatting is available under the Resources menu at www.worldembracing.net*