

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Riḍván 2024

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

Two years of a formidable nine-year endeavour have sped by. The friends of God have taken its objectives firmly to heart. Across the Bahá'í world there is an increased depth of understanding about what is required to further extend the process of community building and effect profound social transformation. But with every passing day, we see too the condition of the world grow more desperate, its divisions more severe. The escalating tensions within societies and between nations affect peoples and places in a myriad ways.

This demands from every conscientious soul a response. We are all too aware that the community of the Greatest Name cannot expect to be unaffected by the travails of society. Yet, though it is affected by these travails, it is not confused by them; it is saddened by humanity's sufferings, but not paralysed by them. Heartfelt concern must prompt sustained effort to build communities that offer hope in place of despair, unity in place of conflict.

Shoghi Effendi described clearly how a process of "progressive deterioration in human affairs" is occurring in parallel with another process, a process of integration, through which the "Ark of human salvation", society's "ultimate haven", is being built up. We rejoice to see, in every country and region, true practitioners of peace occupied with building this haven. We see it in every account of a heart being enkindled with the love of God, a family opening up its home to new friends, collaborators drawing on Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to address a social problem, a community strengthening a culture of mutual support, a neighbourhood or village learning to initiate and sustain the actions necessary for its own spiritual and material progress, a locality being blessed with the emergence of a new Spiritual Assembly.

The methods and instruments of the Plan allow every soul to contribute a share of what humanity needs in this day. Far from offering a temporary salve for the ills of the moment, the prosecution of the Plan is the means by which long-term, constructive processes, unfolding over generations, are being set in motion in every society. All of this points to an urgent, inescapable conclusion: There must be a sustained, rapid rise in the number of those committing their time, their energy, their concentration to the success of this work.

Where else but in Bahá'u'lláh's principle of the oneness of humankind can the world find a vision broad enough to unite all its diverse elements? How else but by translating that vision into an order based on unity in diversity can the world heal the social fractures that divide it? Who else can be the leaven through which the peoples of the world can discover a new way of life, a pathway to enduring peace? Extend then to everyone the hand of friendship, of common endeavour, of shared service, of collective learning, and advance as one.

We are conscious of how much vibrancy and strength is generated in any society by its youth being awakened to the vision of Bahá'u'lláh and becoming protagonists of the Plan. And so, with what immense kindness, courage, and complete reliance on God must Bahá'í youth resolve to reach out to their peers and bring them into this work! All must surge, but the youth must soar.

The urgency of the present hour must not obscure the special joy that comes from service. The call to service is an uplifting, all-embracing summons. It attracts every faithful soul, even those weighed down by cares and obligations. For in all the ways in which that faithful soul is occupied can be discovered deep-rooted devotion and a lifelong concern for the well-being of others. Such qualities give coherence to a life of manifold demands. And the sweetest moments of

all for any enkindled heart are those spent with spiritual sisters and brothers, tending to a society in need of spiritual nourishment.

In the Holy Shrines, with overflowing hearts, we thank Bahá'u'lláh for having raised you up and trained you in His ways, and we entreat Him to send you His blessing.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]