

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

January 19, 2023

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Sultán

Dearly loved Friends,

The National Spiritual Assembly has, over the course of nearly a year, **observed with great pride and happiness your devoted efforts to advance the aims of the Nine Year Plan**, the latest stage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan for the spiritual regeneration of human civilization. In so doing, you are working shoulder to shoulder with your fellow believers in every part of the world. While each national community is advancing within a specific cultural context, **all are striving to create communities that stand in stark contrast to a world that is riven with prejudice, divisiveness, and injustice. The patterns of life resulting from these efforts will stand together as a beacon of hope, guiding the way forward at a time of increasing distress and despair.**

Our beloved Universal House of Justice was ordained by the Blessed Beauty to illuminate our path, unite our approach, and channel our efforts along the most productive lines. Indeed, one is astonished at the clarity, potency, and breadth of its loving guidance to the friends everywhere. One recent example is its letter of November 1, 2022 to believers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which **the House of Justice addresses themes that are as relevant to us as to our precious brothers and sisters in that country.**

The letter offers

- *a succinct but profound **perspective** on this moment in history,*
- *its fundamental **challenges**, and*
- *our proper **response** as Bahá'ís.*

We eagerly commend the entire letter to your study, a copy of which is attached for your convenience, and hope that the following extracts will encourage your own exploration of this weighty message.

In its opening paragraph, the Supreme Body

- *acknowledges the **possibilities** for teaching that exist within the country,*
- *the **seriousness** of ongoing **conflicts**,*
- *and the **consequent challenge** facing the friends:*

Your country is blessed with remarkable ethnic and cultural diversity. How happy we have been over the years to witness the receptivity of its peoples to the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. **Yet, alas, your nation has time and again suffered from conflict among some of its peoples.**

As a part of Congolese society, **you are, of course, not immune to the forces that generate and drive conflict.**

What this demands is vigilance by all the believers in ensuring that divisions, especially those related to ethnicity, do not take root in your community. Such divisions can impede your efforts to develop your community and to foster the spiritual and material progress of your nation.

Your duty as Bahá'ís is

- *to **act as true champions of the oneness of humankind**, and*
- *to **promote unity in your communities and in the life of your nation.***

It is about this **vital duty** that we wish to address you.

57 **Further on, the House of Justice**

- 58 1. *situates current challenges* in the context of history, and
 59 2. *describes what will be required* for humanity to advance from its present stage of development to
 60 the next:

61
 62 Bahá'u'lláh has appeared to humanity in this period of its adolescence, when it is in
 63 need of maturation. As you are well aware, He has provided the means for establishing
 64 the unity of humankind, the hallmark of a mature world.

65
 66 **What will bind the hearts of all people together is the power of the Word of God.**
 67 That Word has generative power which in every age has provided the means for
 68 refining human character and reordering human affairs. The mission of the Bahá'ís is to
 69 learn to apply the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in their individual and collective lives and
 70 in the life of their society.

71
 72 Through **well-ordered efforts and in collaboration** with many others who are
 73 dedicated to bettering the world, Bahá'ís
 74 • *bring the principles suited to humanity's age of maturity to bear on the conditions* of
 75 the world's peoples. They
 76 • *strive for the transformation of the inner and outer realities* of human life, and
 77 • for the *cultivation of spiritual and social conditions that will give rise to a new kind of*
 78 *people* and a new society founded on unity.

79
 80 **The Supreme Body then addresses two of the major obstacles to human prosperity:**

- 81 1. "the *distortion of human identity*" and
 82 2. "the *spread of prejudice.*"

83
 84 **In essence, it is humanity's failure to understand our own true nature and essential unity that is**
 85 **the source of the misery and injustices we suffer. The result of this is rampant prejudice, thus**
 86 **perverting our private lives, our relationships with others, our communities, and our civil**
 87 **institutions.** There is, as well, a view of human nature that does not take into account the spiritual
 88 resources available to us to effect lasting change, resulting in modes of language and action that
 89 are doomed to failure.

90
 91 **By contrast, the Bahá'ís are challenged to undertake "efforts in the fields of**

- 92 1. *community building,*
 93 2. *social action,* and
 94 3. *public discourse* [that] represent ways of awakening the energies latent in the human soul
 95 and channelling them towards the betterment of society."

96
 97 The message continues:

98
 99 **Whether large or small, your community-building efforts are directed at raising the**
 100 **nucleus and pattern of a new World Order by establishing the kind of relationships**
 101 **called for by Bahá'u'lláh.** And emerging among all who are labouring together is

- 102 • *a language that elevates all and maligns none,*
 103 • *a language with the potency to bind hearts with the indissoluble bond of love*
 104 • *and the power to unite minds in common pursuit of a society that can truly be as a*
 105 *garden bursting with flowers of every form, every colour, every fragrance.*

106 **It is in all these ways that you are creating new communities that can serve as a model**
 107 **and relationships that enable you to act as leaven in the life of your nation.**

108
 109 **And finally, the House of Justice issues a special challenge to the rising generation of believers:**

110

111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142

In closing, we now address the youth:

1. **The future is in your hands.**
2. Make no mistake, **you are raising an edifice that will be a haven for your peoples** upon the foundations your mothers and your fathers have laid.
3. **Continued progress will depend**
 - a. **on your dedication to building true unity and**
 - b. **on the extent to which you strengthen your practice of those spiritual disciplines** enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh that help you polish the mirrors of your hearts to reflect the attributes of God.
4. We hope that you will **foster among yourselves enduring spiritual bonds** that resist the forces of prejudice.
5. **Let the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá be your guide—**
 - a. how He *lived* His life as a *daily sacrifice* to the cause of the oneness of humanity,
 - b. how He *embraced with selfless love all people who* crossed His path,
 - c. how He *saw reflected in each soul the image of a loving God.*

So, too, are you to see all your compatriots.

We hope that you will take time to study this significant letter in depth, and that you will derive from it increased resolve as you continue your steadfast labors in the path of service. Be assured of our ardent prayers for your confirmation and well-being.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Attachment