

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

2 January 2016

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

We address you these words from the gathering where, for five successive days, the Continental Counsellors have earnestly considered the implications of the next global Plan. Their insightful consultations drew on the impressive body of knowledge about the process of capacity building that is being generated in thousands of clusters worldwide. The numerous accounts that were shared in the course of the Conference attested the creativity, tenacity, and burgeoning abilities of the community of the Greatest Name and, above all, its reliance on the confirmations of the Almighty. There is a growing appreciation among people in all parts of the world of the efficacy of Bahá'u'lláh's remedy for healing the maladies of society.

Before the first century of the Formative Age concludes, there lies a span of time that stretches between two anniversaries associated with documents of measureless significance. It begins with the centenary of the revelation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, just as the friends are embarking on a new stage in the unfoldment of that Plan. It ends at the lapse of one hundred years since the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was followed by the opening of the Master's Will and Testament. With these thoughts in mind, and in preparation for their deliberations, the Continental Counsellors, led by the members of the Universal House of Justice and the International Teaching Centre, visited the House of the Master—the place where three of the Tablets of the Divine Plan had been revealed and where, a few weeks after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, His Will and Testament had been read aloud to believers from four continents. In that sacred House, on the eve of the present Conference, passages were recited from those two Charters which, Shoghi Effendi explained, set in motion processes for the propagation of the Faith and the establishment of its Administrative Order. This was a fitting prologue to five days of consultation focused on diffusing more widely the light of Bahá'u'lláh and strengthening the ability of His institutions to act as channels through which His promised blessings may flow to humankind.

The provisions of the coming Five Year Plan are contained in the message that we addressed to the Conference on its opening day and which was at the same time distributed to all National Spiritual Assemblies. The colossal effort that will be asked from the loved ones of the Lord was clearly recognized by the Counsellors, but they also voiced their confidence in the capacity of the Bahá'í world to face this challenge. At no earlier time could such an undertaking have been seriously contemplated, but given what is being achieved in the present Plan, the realms of possibility are wider than ever before. Our hearts were moved by the reports that began to arrive, within hours of our message to the Conference being released, of the friends eagerly coming together in settings of all kinds to help one another become familiar with its contents. We hope that study of the message will spread rapidly throughout the community. Meanwhile, the institutions will be putting in place whatever administrative and organizational arrangements are necessary to ensure the most auspicious start to the Plan at Ridván.

In the few months that remain before then, the work of the current Plan, establishing new programmes of growth in particular, will continue to be pursued. Every step taken in that direction will increase the readiness of the worldwide community to begin the next five-year enterprise. Each moment is precious. We long to see every believer choose the path of consecrated service and high endeavour to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeatedly summoned the friends in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. In our supplications on your behalf, we will beseech the Author of that Plan to

intercede before the throne of His Father that He might guide you in your service as long as there are souls in need of the bread of heaven.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

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