

## THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

24 May 2022

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's clarion call in His Tablets of the Divine Plan for the believers to arise and travel far and wide, to plant the "pure seeds" of the divine teachings, and to "become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity", wave upon wave of His loved ones have responded enthusiastically to enter the pioneering field. The Divine Plan—whose unfoldment is now in its third epoch—as well as the global Plans of the Bahá'í community that constitute its successive stages, continue to inspire and channel the efforts of the friends and reinforce their sense of mission and commitment to creating a world materially and spiritually prosperous. Indeed, through these dedicated efforts the Faith has taken root in the farthest corners of the earth and is flourishing in numerous settings, and where the soil of the human heart has been especially fertile, the release of its society-building power is increasingly evident. Owing to the requisites of the last two Plans, greater emphasis was given to homefront pioneering, resulting in over 7,000 friends entering this field of service, while some 700 responded to the call for pioneers in the international arena. Considering the restrictions on movement and travel in place for a significant part of this period, this achievement is truly remarkable. Even more astounding is the fact that these pioneers were raised in 169 countries—a testament to the spiritual capacity, consecration, and resolve of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh.

As indicated in our message of 30 December 2021 addressed to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, countries or regions where the Faith is at an early stage of development can greatly benefit from what is being learned in Bahá'í communities around the world about accelerating the work of expansion and consolidation. What has become apparent in this respect is the advantage of having a cluster where the third milestone has been passed. In this light, one of the chief objectives of the Nine Year Plan is to have at least one such cluster in every country and region. There are some 160 places where this goal remains to be achieved; several hundred pioneers, mostly in the international arena, are needed early on to ensure that this objective is attained by the end of the Plan. In this regard, Bahá'í communities in countries where the processes of growth are firmly established are expected to provide the majority of such pioneers. It is anticipated that these friends would come from stronger clusters, settle in less advanced centres of activity in receiving countries or regions, and quickly become part of an emerging nucleus of individuals committed to cultivating a vibrant pattern of community life. The spiritual forces released by such movement and the experience that a pioneer is able to bring to the community are potent catalysts for progress. The National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils in the countries from which pioneers are expected to arise bear a special responsibility to facilitate this movement and to offer support to the goal clusters, such as

by facilitating visits by travelling teachers and institute resource persons, or connecting active participants in a pioneer's new community to the process of learning under way in the advanced clusters in their country.

As outlined in our message to the Bahá'ís of the world at Ridván, it is anticipated that over the course of the current Plan, programmes of growth will be established in thousands of new clusters, that the number of clusters with an intensive programme of growth will more than double to 11,000, and that over 5,000 of these will have advanced further. The achievement of these formidable global objectives, based on forecasts made by the National Assemblies themselves, calls for urgent advances on many fronts, among them generating a steady flow of homefront pioneers who can arise and move to neighbourhoods or clusters where help is required. In this connection, results are more easily obtained when these pioneers move from a cluster with a well-established programme of growth to a locality that is nearby or within the same region, thus taking advantage of similarities in culture and language, and building on social and familial connections that may exist. One pattern of service that developed during the last two Plans and brought us great joy concerned the movement of youth who, taking advantage of their relative freedom, would spend several months in a nascent community, making a valuable contribution to its development. This pattern holds great promise for the Nine Year Plan.

Beyond what is described above, believers who are moved to offer a period of service as a pioneer can, of course, arise from anywhere and settle wherever in the world they feel they can make a contribution to the development of the Faith. Familiarity with the provisions of the global Plans and experience with teaching the Cause and community-building activities in one's own cluster can be of tremendous advantage in this field of service.

Confident of the community's appreciation of the significance of this historical juncture and in its capacity to respond to the demands of the hour, we now call on the friends to consider how they can contribute to the pioneering imperatives of the Nine Year Plan—both on the home front and in the international field. In preparing to enter this vital arena, they will find the counsels of the institutions indispensable. As they arise to shed abroad ever more widely the divine fragrances, the words of the Guardian to the followers of the Blessed Beauty some seven decades ago at the opening of the World Crusade will no doubt resound in their ears: "Light as the spirit, 'pure as air,' 'blazing as fire,' 'unrestrained as the wind'—for such is Bahá'u'lláh's own admonition to His loved ones in His Tablets, and directed not to a select few but to the entire congregation of the faithful—let them scatter far and wide, proclaim the glory of God's Revelation in this Day, quicken the souls of men and ignite in their hearts the love of the One Who alone is their omnipotent and divinely appointed Redeemer."

[signed] The Universal House of Justice