

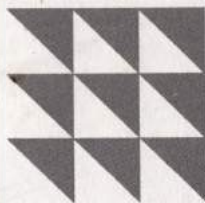


The Continental Boards of Counselors

Letters, Extracts from Letters,
and Cables from
The Universal House of Justice

An Address by
Counselor Edna M. True

Compiled by:
National Spiritual Assembly of the
Bahá'ís of the United States



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Foreword

A year after its election in 1963 The Universal House of Justice announced to the Bahá'í world that there was "no way to appoint, or to legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God," who, according to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were to be appointed by the Guardian of the Cause of God. Upholding the distinctive importance of the functions of protection and propagation assigned in that same document to these high-ranking officers of the Faith, the House of Justice adopted the objective, announced as part of the Nine Year Plan (1964–1973), of developing the institution of the Hands of the Cause "with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation." The fruit of its prolonged consideration of this objective in consultation with the body of the Hands of the Cause was the momentous decision announced on 21 June 1968 to appoint Continental Boards of Counselors.

Designed to "operate in harmony with the principles governing the functioning of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God," the Boards of Counselors immediately assumed the duties of "directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, consulting and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Cause in their areas."

At first, eleven Boards were appointed; then there was an increase to twelve and eventually to thirteen. On the Day of the Covenant (26 November) 1980, twelve years after the institution had come into existence, the House of Justice activated its decision of 1979 to establish five-year terms for Continental Counselors. With the beginning of the new term came the further step of amalgamating the thirteen Boards of Counselors' zones into five zones—Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Europe—so

that now there were five Boards but a much larger number of Counselors than the thirty-three who were first appointed.

A signal development during the Counselors' first twelve years that would profoundly affect the institution's evolution was the establishment in 1973 of the International Teaching Center foreshadowed in the writings of Shoghi Effendi and which the House of Justice introduced to the world community as destined to become one of those "world-shaking," "world-embracing," "world-directing" institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Among its duties the International Teaching Center, whose membership comprises all the Hands of the Cause and specified Counselors, would "coordinate, stimulate and direct the activities of the Continental Boards of Counselors and . . . act as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice." Here, then, was a stupendous achievement, a crown to the services of the Hands of the Cause, who were to "assist in launching and guiding the new procedures" of the institution created to "reinforce and supplement the work of the Hands of the Cause" and to extend that vital work into the future.

Through cables and letters The Universal House of Justice laid the basis for the rapid absorption of the new system of Boards of Counselors into the broad fabric of the Administrative Order. Its directives, guidance, and elucidations concerning the development, functions, and relationships of the Boards of Counselors are contained in monumental documents, the major ones of which are compiled herein.

The compilation of these documents, accompanied by the text of a speech by Counselor Edna M. True on the relationship of the Continental Boards of Counselors to National Spiritual Assemblies, will greatly facilitate the efforts of those who seek to improve their understanding of an institution, which despite its recent creation, has already demonstrated its indispensability to the progress of the Bahá'í world community.

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

1

Establishment of Eleven Continental Boards of Counselors

21 June 1968

Rejoice announce momentous decision establish eleven Continental Boards Counselors protection propagation Faith three each for Africa Americas Asia one each for Australasia Europe. Adoption this significant step following consultation with Hands Cause God ensures extension future appointed functions their institution. Continental Boards entrusted in close collaboration Hands Cause with responsibility direction Auxiliary Boards and consultation National Spiritual Assemblies. Hands Cause God will henceforth increase intercontinental services assuming worldwide role protection propagation Faith. Members Auxiliary Boards will report be responsible to Continental Boards Counselors. Hands Cause residing Holy Land in addition serving liaison between Universal House Justice and Continental Boards Counselors will assist future establishment International Teaching Center Holy Land foreshadowed writings beloved Guardian. Details new developments being conveyed by letter. Fervently supplicating Holy Threshold divine confirmations further step irresistible unfoldment mighty Administrative Order Bahá'u'lláh.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Appointment of Continental Boards of Counselors (1)

24 June 1968

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The majestic unfoldment of Bahá'u'lláh's world-redeeming administrative system has been marked by the successive estab-

lishment of the various institutions and agencies which constitute the framework of that divinely-created Order. Thus, more than a quarter-of-a-century after the emergence of the first National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í world the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God was formally established, with the appointment by the beloved Guardian, in conformity with the provisions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, of the first contingent of these high-ranking officers of the Faith. Following the passing of the Guardian of the Cause of God, it fell to the House of Justice to devise a way, within the Administrative Order, of developing "the Institution of the Hands of the Cause with a view to extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation," and this was made a goal of the Nine Year Plan. Much thought and study has been given to the question over the past four years, and the texts have been collected and reviewed. During the last two months, this goal, as announced in our cable to the National Conventions, has been the object of prolonged and prayerful consultation between the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause of God. All this made evident the framework within which this goal was to be achieved, namely:

The Universal House of Justice sees no way in which additional Hands of the Cause of God can be appointed.

The absence of the Guardian of the Faith brought about an entirely new relationship between the Universal House of Justice and the Hands of the Cause and called for the progressive unfoldment by the Universal House of Justice of the manner in which the Hands of the Cause would carry out their divinely-conferred functions of protection and propagation.

Whatever new development or institution is initiated should come into operation as soon as possible in order to reinforce and supplement the work of the Hands of the Cause while at the same time taking full advantage of the opportunity of having the Hands themselves assist in launching and guiding the new procedures.

Any such institution must grow and operate in harmony with the principles governing the functioning of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God.

In the light of these considerations the Universal House of Justice decided, as announced in its recent cable, to establish Continental Boards of Counselors for the protection and propagation of the Faith. Their duties will include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, consulting and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Cause in their areas.

Initially eleven Boards of Counselors have been appointed, one for each of the following areas: Northwestern Africa, Central and East Africa, Southern Africa, North America, Central America, South America, Western Asia, Southeastern Asia, Northeastern Asia, Australasia and Europe.

The members of these Boards of Counselors will serve for a term, or terms, the length of which will be determined and announced at a later date, and while serving in this capacity, will not be eligible for membership on national or local administrative bodies. One member of each Continental Board of Counselors has been designated as Trustee of the Continental Fund for its area.

The Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation will henceforth report to the Continental Boards of Counselors who will appoint or replace members of the Auxiliary Boards as circumstances may require. Such appointments and replacements as may be necessary in the initial stages will take place after consultation with the Hand or Hands previously assigned to the continent or zone.

The Hands of the Cause of God have the prerogative and obligation to consult with the Continental Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies on any subject which, in their view, affects the interests of the Cause. The Hands residing in the Holy Land will act as liaison between the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counselors, and will also assist the Universal House of Justice in setting up, at a propitious time, an international teaching center in the Holy Land, as anticipated in the Guardian's writings.

The Hands of the Cause of God are one of the most precious assets the Bahá'í world possesses. Released from administration of the Auxiliary Boards, they will be able to concentrate their energies on the more primary responsibilities of general protection and propagation, "preservation of the spiritual health of the

Bahá'í communities'' and ''the vitality of the faith'' of the Bahá'ís throughout the world. The House of Justice will call upon them to undertake special missions on its behalf, to represent it on both Bahá'í and other occasions and to keep it informed of the welfare of the Cause. While the Hands of the Cause will, naturally, have special concern for the affairs of the Cause in the areas in which they reside, they will operate increasingly on an intercontinental level, a factor which will lend tremendous impetus to the diffusion throughout the Bahá'í world of the spiritual inspiration channeled through them—the Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth.

With joyful hearts we proclaim this further unfoldment of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh and join our prayers to those of the friends throughout the East and the West that Bahá'u'lláh may continue to shower His confirmations upon the efforts of His servants in the safeguarding and promotion of His Faith.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Appointment of Continental Boards of Counselors (2)

24 June 1968

To: All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We are enclosing a message addressed to the Bahá'ís of the world outlining the decisions of the Universal House of Justice arrived at in consultation with the Hands of the Cause of God in implementation of the goal of the Nine Year Plan concerning the development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, with a view to the extension into the future of its appointed functions of protection and propagation.

The relationship of Continental Boards of Counselors to National Spiritual Assemblies will follow the pattern of the relationship between the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual

Assemblies, outlined by the beloved Guardian in various communications. Within the framework of these, and of general instructions given to them by the Universal House of Justice, the Boards of Counselors will decide the manner in which they will collaborate and consult with National Spiritual Assemblies in their areas. You will readily recognize the importance of this close collaboration, which is indeed vital to the future progress of the Cause.

Although henceforth the Hands of the Cause will be operating increasingly on an intercontinental level and in direct relationship with the Universal House of Justice, they will, in addition to carrying out special missions on its behalf, continue to exercise their prerogative and obligation of consulting with National Spiritual Assemblies on any subject which, in their view, affects the interests of the Cause. National Spiritual Assemblies should at all times take advantage of the presence of Hands of the Cause in their areas to seek their views on all fundamental matters, particularly in the areas of protection and propagation.

It is our hope and prayer that all National Spiritual Assemblies may lend full support to the labors and services of these newly-appointed workers in the Divine Vineyard, and derive additional strength and fresh inspiration from the efforts they will exert in the discharge of their highly-challenging and sacred responsibilities.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

First Appointments to Continental Boards of Counselors

24 June 1968

To: All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We list below the names of those who have been appointed to the first Continental Boards of Counselors for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith:

Northwestern Africa

Ḥusayn Ardikání (Trustee, Continental Fund), Muḥammad Kebdani, William Maxwell.

Central and East Africa

Oloro Epyeru, Kolonario Oule, Isobel Sabri, Mihdí Samandari, 'Azíz Yazdí (Trustee, Continental Fund).

Southern Africa

Seewoosumbur-Jeehoba Appa, Shidan Fat'he-Aazam (Trustee, Continental Fund), Bahíyyih Ford.

North America

Lloyd Gardner, Florence Mayberry, Edna True (Trustee, Continental Fund).

Central America

Carmen de Burafato, Artemus Lamb, Alfred Osborne (Trustee, Continental Fund).

South America

Athos Costas, Hooper Dunbar (Trustee, Continental Fund) Donald Witzel.

Western Asia

Masīḥ Farhangí, Mas'úd Khamsí, Ḥádí Rahmání (Trustee, Continental Fund), Manúchihr Salmánpúr, Sankaran-Nair Vasudevan.

Southeast Asia

Yan Kee Leong, Khudáraḥm Paymán (Trustee, Continental Fund), Chellie Sundram.

Northeast Asia

Rúḥu'lláh Mumtází (Trustee, Continental Fund), Vicente Samaniego.

Australasia

Suhayl 'Alá'í, Howard Harwood, Thelma Perks (Trustee, Continental Fund).

Europe

Erik Blumenthal, Dorothy Ferraby (Trustee, Continental Fund), Louis Hénuzet.

Please share this list with the friends.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Duties and Responsibilities of Continental Boards of Counselors

24 June 1968

Continental Board of Counselors for the
Protection and Propagation of the Faith
in North America

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

At your first meeting, which will be convened by one of the Hands of the Cause of God, we call on you to carefully study the contents of the enclosed messages, as well as the following additional points:

1. The Continental Boards of Counselors, as indicated in these messages, are charged with specific functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith in the areas under their jurisdiction. They will operate in a manner similar to that set forth by the beloved Guardian for the Hands of the Cause in his communications outlining the responsibilities they are called upon to discharge in collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies. We particularly draw your attention to his message of June 4, 1957:

“Call upon Hands and National Assemblies, each continent separately, to establish henceforth direct contact and deliberate, whenever feasible, as frequently as possible, to exchange reports to be submitted by their respective Auxiliary Boards and national committees, to exercise unrelaxing vigilance and carry out unflinchingly their sacred, inescapable duties. The security of our precious Faith, the preservation of the spiritual health of the Bahá'í communities, the vitality of the faith of its individual members, the proper functioning of its laboriously erected institutions, the fruition of its worldwide enterprises, the fulfillment of its ultimate destiny, all are directly dependent upon the befitting discharge of the weighty responsibilities now resting upon the members of these two institutions . . .”

2. The full designation of your body is: "Continental Board of Counselors for the Protection and Propagation of the Bahá'í Faith in North America."

3. Each Continental Board of Counselors will make arrangements for the handling of its correspondence and will designate its official address.

4. The manner in which the Continental Boards of Counselors will keep the Universal House of Justice informed of activities and developments will be through quarterly reports to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land and, where necessary, through reports on special problems urgent and vital to the progress of the Faith, or points that require clarification.

5. The members of the Continental Boards of Counselors, in addition to administering the work of the Auxiliary Boards, will travel, as necessary, in the area under their jurisdiction, in accordance with procedures decided by the body itself.

6. Replacements on the Auxiliary Boards will have to be made for those Auxiliary Board members who are appointed to the Continental Boards of Counselors.

7. When a member of a Continental Board of Counselors moves from his area of service he will automatically lose his membership, and a replacement will have to be made.

8. Relationship between the Hands of the Cause and the Continental Boards of Counselors

(a) The Boards of Counselors will collaborate with Hands of the Cause residing in, or visiting, their areas and keep them supplied with information. The Boards are asked to send copies of their minutes and other reports to the Hands in their areas.

(b) Boards of Counselors should welcome the presence of Hands of the Cause at their meetings and their participation in their deliberations, but the members of the Boards of

Counselors are responsible for arriving at their own decisions.

(c) The authority of expulsion and reinstatement will be exercised by the Hands of the Cause of God, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice. When a member of the Continental Boards of Counselors learns of any incipient Covenant-breaking, the matter should be reported without delay to a Hand of the Cause available in the area, who will deal with the matter. A copy of the report should be sent to the Hands in the Holy Land and to the other members of the Board. Should no Hand of the Cause be available in the area, the report should be sent to the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, with copy to the other members of the Board, in which case the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land will deal with the matter. Such reports should contain full details of actions already taken.

(d) Reinstatement of Covenant-breakers will follow similar procedures.

9. Finances

(a) Hands of the Cause serving as Trustees of the Continental Funds will arrange with the Trustee of your Continental Board the transfer of whatever funds fall under your jurisdiction.

(b) These Hands of the Cause will also advise you of the estimated needs of each continent or zone, and will provide a rough estimate of the expected contributions forthcoming from National Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers.

(c) The Continental Boards of Counselors will determine, upon receiving these figures and in consultation with the Hand of the Cause who has been serving as Trustee of the Continental Fund, as well as with other Hands of the Cause in the area, the items they should include in their budget, and to what extent, if any, they need apply to the Universal House of Justice for supplementary assistance.

(d) In due course the Continental Boards of Counselors will be in a position to present to the Universal House of Justice figures of estimated annual budget requirements.

10. Auxiliary Boards

(a) The two Boards for Teaching and Protection will remain distinct, and their functions will be unchanged.

(b) Auxiliary Board members presently serving in an executive capacity will cease to function in that capacity.

(c) The number of Auxiliary Board members to be assigned to each continental zone is as follows:

	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Propagation</i>
AFRICA		
Northwestern	3	6
Central and East	4	7
Southern	2	5
	9	18
AMERICA		
North	4	9
Central	2	8
South	3	10
	9	27
ASIA		
Western	4	15
Southeastern	2	7
Northeastern	1	7
	7	29
AUSTRALASIA		
	2	7
EUROPE		
	9	18

11. Relationship between the Continental Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies

(a) The relationship between the Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies will follow the pattern, outlined by the beloved Guardian, of the relationship between the Hands of the Cause in the Continents and the National Spiritual Assemblies.

(b) Within the framework of the above and of general instructions given to them by the Universal House of Justice, the Boards of Counselors will decide the manner in which they will collaborate and consult with National Spiritual Assemblies in their areas.

(c) The sharing of National Spiritual Assembly minutes with the Boards of Counselors is left to the discretion of each National Spiritual Assembly.

As soon as your Board is organized, please write to the National Spiritual Assemblies in your area announcing your address, and, in this initial correspondence, pave the way for that close collaboration between your two institutions, which is so essential to the welfare of the Cause and the progress of the Nine Year Plan.

We assure you of our fervent prayers at the Holy Shrines for the successful launching of your vital services to the Cause of God, and for the attainment of early and great victories in His Name.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

AREAS ASSIGNED TO CONTINENTAL BOARDS OF COUNSELORS

AFRICA

1. *Northwestern Zone:* general geographical area of North West Africa, west of and including Tunisia, Algeria, Niger

and Nigeria. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

North Africa	West Africa
North West Africa	West Central Africa

2. *Central and East Zone*: general geographical area of Central, East, and North East Africa. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Cameroon Republic	Tanzania
Kenya	Uganda and Central Africa
North East Africa	

3. *Southern Zone*: general geographical area of Southern Africa, south of and including Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and the islands of the Indian Ocean. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Indian Ocean	Swaziland, Lesotho and
South Central Africa	Mozambique
South and West Africa	Zambia

AMERICA

1. *North Zone*: general geographical area of North America, excluding Mexico. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Alaska	United States
Canada	

2. *Central Zone*: general geographical area of Central America including Mexico and the islands of the Caribbean. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Belize	Honduras
Costa Rica	Jamaica
Cuba	Leeward, Windward &
Dominican Republic	Virgin Islands
El Salvador	Mexico
Guatemala	Nicaragua
Haiti	Panama

3. *South Zone*: general geographical area of South America. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Argentina	Ecuador
Bolivia	Paraguay
Brazil	Peru
Chile	Uruguay
Colombia	Venezuela

ASIA

1. *Western Zone*: general geographical area of Western Asia, west of Burma. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Arabia	'Irâq
Ceylon	Pakistan
Eastern and Southern Arabia	Persia
India	Sikkim
	Turkey

2. *Southeastern Zone*: general geographical area of South-East Asia, east of and including Burma. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Brunei	Malaysia
Burma	Thailand
Indonesia	Vietnam
Laos	

3. *Northeastern Zone*: general geographical area of North-Eastern Asia. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Korea	Philippines
North East Asia	Taiwan

AUSTRALASIA

General geographical area of Australasia. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Australia	New Zealand
Gilbert and Ellice Islands	South Pacific Ocean
Hawaiian Islands	South West Pacific Ocean

EUROPE

General geographical area of the European Continent and the islands of the Mediterranean and North Seas. This area includes the home fronts of the following National Spiritual Assemblies:

Austria	Luxembourg
Belgium	Netherlands
British Isles	Norway
Denmark	Portugal
Finland	Spain
France	Sweden
Germany	Switzerland
Italy	

Clarification of Responsibilities of Continental Boards of Counselors

25 March 1969

To All Continental Boards of Counselors

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

It is with feelings of deep satisfaction and appreciation that we have noted, during these first months since the establishment of your new institution, the rapid and effective manner in which you have inaugurated and developed your work. We feel that additional clarification of certain points will be helpful to the Continental Boards of Counselors in discharging their vital responsibilities.

Relationships between Hands of the Cause, Continental Boards of Counselors and Auxiliary Board members.

The high station of the Hands of the Cause and the intercontinental scope of their diverse activities call for the fullest cooperation from the Continental Boards of Counselors with each Hand, whether resident or traveling, and provision of complete information which the Hand may require for the discharge of his sacred duties. The Continental Boards of Counselors should freely offer

their own or Auxiliary Board members' services.

Emergencies may occasionally arise which require a Hand to direct an Auxiliary Board member, in which case the Continental Board of Counselors will be advised by the Hand as quickly as possible of the action taken.

Individual Counselors.

1. The Continental Boards of Counselors are authorized to determine the ways by which individual Counselors can, in the fulfillment of their duties, best contact national and local Assemblies, groups and individuals.

2. Each letter from the Continental Board of Counselors should be signed in his own name by the Counselor who has written the letter.

3. National Spiritual Assemblies will extend a cordial invitation to members of the Continental Board of Counselors of an area to attend each National Convention. All Counselors present at a Convention in their area will be accorded the same freedom of the Convention as is given to the Hands of the Cause. If no Counselors can attend a Convention, they may appoint for that Convention one or two Auxiliary Board members to act as their special deputies, who will be warmly welcomed and given the courtesy of taking part in the Convention as representatives of the Board of Counselors.

Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation.

1. The functions of the Auxiliary Boards have been set forth in a compilation issued to the Continental Boards of Counselors by the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land. Copies have been shared with National Spiritual Assemblies.

2. The two Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation have distinctive functions, as prescribed by the beloved Guardian. Members of the Auxiliary Board for Protection certainly may assist in propagating the Faith, but their primary duty is that of protection. In exceptional cases, Continental Boards of Coun-

selsors may find it necessary to assign a member of the Propagation Board to a matter of protection.

3. Auxiliary Board members do not have the authority to appoint deputies.

4. Auxiliary Board members present at a National Convention do not have the privilege of the floor unless deputized by the Continental Board of Counselors or given the privilege of the floor by the Convention.

Information and Communication.

1. Sharing of Minutes by a National Spiritual Assembly with the Continental Board of Counselors of its area is at the option of each National Spiritual Assembly; it can share its entire Minutes, or any parts thereof. However, it is inappropriate for a Continental Board of Counselors to share Minutes of its meetings with National Spiritual Assemblies. Specific reports from Continental Boards of Counselors and Auxiliary Boards should be adequate for the information of National Assemblies.

2. Information transmitted by National Spiritual Assemblies and their committees to Continental Boards of Counselors and their Auxiliary Board members should be as complete as possible. Conversely, a maximum of material from the Counselors and Auxiliary Board members' reports should be made available to National Spiritual Assemblies.

3. Continental Pioneer Committees have been asked to provide copies of their general reports to the Continental Boards of Counselors of their areas.

4. National Spiritual Assemblies are to provide the Continental Boards of Counselors of their respective areas with copies of the Semi-Annual Statistical Reports to the Universal House of Justice on the progress of the goals of the Nine Year Plan.

Finances.

The budgets of National Spiritual Assemblies are of interest to

the Continental Board of Counselors for that area, primarily because of the vital role of funds allocated for teaching and deepening. Therefore, National Spiritual Assemblies are being requested to send to the Continental Boards of Counselors copies of their budgets when completed.

In our prayers at the Holy Shrines we supplicate for your guidance in the labors which you undertake so sacrificially for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

**Collaboration of Continental Boards of
Counselors and Auxiliary Boards
with National Spiritual Assemblies**

25 March 1969

To All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

With the rapid development of the work of the Continental Boards of Counselors and their Auxiliary Boards, it is increasingly important that there be a maximal sharing of information from each national community with them. Your most effective collaboration depends largely upon the thoroughness of your mutual exchange of information.

1. A compilation has been made of statements from the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice on the functions of the Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation. A copy is enclosed for your study and appreciation of the work of your colleagues in service to the Faith.

2. We ask you to extend a cordial invitation to the Continental Board of Counselors of your area to attend each of your Annual Conventions. All Counselors present at a Convention should be accorded the same freedom of the Convention as is given to the Hands of the Cause. If no Counselors can attend a Convention,

they may appoint for that Convention one or two Auxiliary Board members to act as their special deputies, who should be warmly welcomed and given the courtesy of taking part in the Convention as representatives of the Board of Counselors.

3. We ask that you keep the Continental Board of Counselors of your area completely and specifically informed of national activities of teaching and consolidation through such actions as placing the Board of Counselors, and Auxiliary Board members assigned to areas within your jurisdiction, on mailing lists for circular letters to Local Spiritual Assemblies, schedules and programs of summer schools, conferences and institutes, etc.

4. When your Annual Budgets are completed, please share copies with the Continental Board of Counselors of your area.

5. A copy of the Semi-Annual Statistical Report on the progress of the Nine Year Plan, as submitted by National Assemblies to the Universal House of Justice, should be provided to the Continental Board of Counselors for your area. The Universal House of Justice will supply duplicate forms to each National Spiritual Assembly for this purpose.

6. Continental Pioneer Committees have been asked to send to the Continental Board of Counselors for their areas copies of their monthly reports to the Universal House of Justice on pioneer and travel teaching activities.

We trust that you will find, in your labors undertaken in concert with the Continental Boards of Counselors and their Auxiliary Boards, an immense fortification of your efforts, and every confirmation of the divine wisdom of the Cause in all its institutions.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

AUXILIARY BOARD MEMBERS

From the Guardian

“Call upon fifteen Hands five continents, by virtue their supreme

function as chosen instruments propagation Faith, inaugurate historic mission through appointment, during Ridván, 1954, five auxiliary boards each continent, nine members each, who will, as their adjuncts, or deputies, and working (in) conjunction various National Assemblies functioning each continent, assist, through periodic systematic visits (to) Bahá'í centers, efficient, prompt execution twelve projected National Plans."

(From the Guardian's cablegram to the Bahá'í world, dated 8 October 1952)

"The tasks of the Auxiliary Boards will be under the direction of the Hands in their area, and, in cooperation with the administrative bodies existing, to strengthen the teaching work. They will not have administrative functions, but will no doubt be able to help stimulate weak centers, groups and assemblies through their visits."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to Dr. Mühlischlegel, dated 16 March 1953)

"Twelfth, the appointment during Ridván 1954, by the Hands of the Cause in the United States and Canada, of an Auxiliary Board of nine members who will, in conjunction with the four National Spiritual Assemblies participating in the American campaign, assist, through periodic and systematic visits to Bahá'í centers, in the efficient and prompt execution of the Plans formulated for the prosecution of the teaching campaign in the American continent."

(From the Guardian's Message to the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Chicago, Illinois, dated 3 May 1953, quoted in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII, p. 140)

"Hour ripe (for) fifteen Hands residing outside Holy Land proceed during Ridván (with) appointment, each continent separately, from among resident Bahá'ís that Continent, (of) Auxiliary Boards, whose members, acting deputies, assistants, advisers Hands, must increasingly lend assistance promotion interests Ten Year Crusade. . . ."

"Allocation areas each continent to members Auxiliary Boards, as well as subsidiary matters regarding development activities newly-appointed bodies, manner collaboration National Spiritual

Assemblies respective Continents, left discretion Hands.

"All Boards must report, be responsible Hands charged their appointment.

"Hands each Continent their turn must keep close touch, report results nominations, progress activities (of) Boards (to) National Assemblies respective continents. . . .

"Urge initiation five Continental Bahá'í Funds which, as they develop, will increasingly facilitate discharge functions assigned Boards. . . ."

(From the Guardian's cablegram to the Hands of the Cause and all National Assemblies of the Bahá'í World, dated 6 April 1954)

"The Board of nine which you . . . will be appointing shortly will not only further the interests of the Ten Year Crusade, but enable the American Hands to carry out their duties in the teaching field without necessarily being present themselves, in the many places requiring attention."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the American Hands, dated 8 April 1954)

"The details of how the Board is to act are left to the discretion of the Hands. The Board is responsible to the Hands and is not a committee in itself, free to come to its own decisions. The Board need not have headquarters; its members must be apportioned different areas to work in; the board members must report to the European Hands.

"Anyone in Europe is eligible to be on this Board, regardless of whatever other activities they may have."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to Dr. Giachery, dated 9 April 1954)

"Measures have been undertaken and Bahá'í Continental Funds inaugurated in anticipation of the forthcoming appointment by the fifteen Hands residing outside the Holy Land of five Auxiliary Boards, one in each of the continents of the globe, the members of which will act as deputies of the Hands in their respective continents, and will aid and advise them in the effective prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan, and will assist them, at a later period in the discharge of their dual and sacred task of safeguarding the Faith

and of promoting its teaching activities.”

(From a letter written by the Guardian to
National Conventions, dated April 1954)

“In this connection we have a suggestion to make to you, and that is that you impress upon the members of your respective Boards the tremendous importance the beloved Guardian attaches to the pioneers persevering in their work in the newly settled goal countries. We feel that some of them are not sufficiently aware of the great station of service to which they have been called as representatives of the Faith in these virgin areas . . .

“ . . . we feel impelled to bring this to your attention so you can, if you feel it advisable to do so, impress on your appointees the great importance of not only keeping in touch with the pioneers, but of helping them to persevere and pointing out to them how sacred is their responsibility, and what a great spiritual defeat it is if they abandon their post when there is a possibility of their remaining.”

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian
to the Hands of the Cause of God, dated
2 May 1954)

“The Guardian feels that the instructions which he has issued with regard to the functioning of the Boards should not be further amplified or detailed at this time. He leaves the operation of the teaching Boards to the Hands of the Cause. Based on the experience which is gained, a definite decision may later be made. Thus, no term of office has been set for the present, for members . . .

“The Guardian leaves to the discretion of the Hands, the number of times members of the Board should visit different localities. This of course would depend on the location of the city and the funds which are available, as well as the strength of the community itself.

“The Guardian feels that funds which have been contributed to the Continental Fund for the use of the Teaching Boards, should not all be used for travel, but that a certain amount should be retained for necessary administrative activities of the Hands of the Cause involved.”

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian
to Mr. Banání, dated 30 May 1954)

“The members of the Boards in turn should encourage the friends—individuals and Assemblies alike—through correspondence and through visits, and impress upon them that the foundation of all of our activities is unity; they should encourage the friends to be unified under all circumstances, so that the work may go ahead with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit. The members of the Boards should likewise encourage the friends to contribute freely to the various Funds, which have been established, as the Funds are the life-blood of the Community, and the work cannot be carried forward unless the life-blood is constantly circulating.

“Kindly note that the Guardian leaves all details in connection with the functioning of the Boards entirely in the hands of the Hands, themselves. He feels there should be no rules of procedure issued in connection with the work of the Hands or their Boards, but that the Groups of Hands in the various continents should, in consultation, decide how they can best carry on their activities, and the manner in which the members of their Boards can best function. It is not necessary to refer to him, through the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, questions of procedure in connection with your work, nor request instructions, unless of course it is in connection with something vital to the progress of the Faith itself, or a point that requires his clarification.

“The reports which are sent to Haifa should cover the achievements of the Hands and the members of the Boards, and not deal with questions of rules and regulations.”

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to Hands of the Cause of God, dated 7 June 1954)

“The Guardian feels sure that the Auxiliary Boards recently appointed by the Hands of the Cause will stimulate and help the teaching work, which of course includes pioneer work, and be a prop and mainstay to the often over-worked and over-burdened National Spiritual Assemblies, as well as to the Hands of the Cause who are carrying, usually, heavy administrative loads in addition to their exalted position as Hands.”

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the American N.S.A., dated 20 June 1954)

“The Guardian has pointed out that the members of the Auxiliary Board are not obliged to travel all the time. Trips whenever feasi-

ble should no doubt be made but the rest of their work should be carried out through correspondence."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to Mr. Banání, dated 2 July 1954)

"If a member of the Board finds any problem which he feels requires adjustment, it is his obligation to report it to the Hands of the Cause; and the Hands of the Cause in turn, if they agree, will handle the matter with the National Assembly involved."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the British N.S.A., dated 19 July 1954)

"The National Spiritual Assembly is the body which is charged with the administrative responsibility of the tasks of the Ten Year Crusade. Neither the Hands of the Cause nor their Boards have administrative responsibilities in connection with this work.

"The members of the Board are to report to the Hands of the Cause in the area regarding all situations, and of course, in detail, concerning any problem which has arisen which requires corrective action.

"The Hands of the Cause themselves will correspond with the National Spiritual Assembly involved, calling their attention to the problem, so that the National Assembly may take appropriate action.

"The Guardian has instructed that the Hands of the Cause are not to correspond with the Committees of the National Spiritual Assemblies, but directly with the National Spiritual Assemblies themselves."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the British N.S.A., dated 22 July 1954)

"I . . . urge as many members of the African Auxiliary Board as possible to attend the sessions, and lend their support to the deliberations, of these gatherings (three African Conventions of 1956)."

(From the Guardian's Message, dated 1 October 1954)

"Correspondence can and should play a large part in your work. Neither time nor money are sufficient to permit the Board members to travel constantly, nor is it absolutely essential. Letters can

and should do a lot in hastening the execution of the Plan.”

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the European Hands, dated 21 April 1955)

“I urge, moreover, as many members as feasible of the Auxiliary Boards appointed by the afore-mentioned Hands of the Cause. . . . to attend these momentous gatherings (thirteen new conventions of Riḍván 1957). . . . and, through their active participation, reinforce and widen the scope of the deliberations of the elected delegates.”

(From a letter written by the Guardian to National Conventions, dated April 1955)

“The friends should be encouraged to support the Continental Teaching Fund in Africa, in order to enable the Auxiliary Board members to travel more widely and more often, and encourage the work and activity which naturally requires fairly heavy expenditure.”

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to Hand of the Cause Mr. Banání, dated 9 May 1955)

“It was the Guardian's intention, in his October 1954 message to urge the members of the Auxiliary Board to attend as many of the National Conventions, as they could, without regard to their own particular territory. . . .

“So far as the use of the Fund for this traveling is concerned, this is in the hands of the Hands of the Cause for determination. . . .”

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to an Auxiliary Board Member in Africa, dated 27 January 1956)

“He sees no objection to the American Hands publishing in the *Bahá'í News* from time to time a statement on what they and the members of the Auxiliary Board have been doing, together with their encouragement and suggestions to the friends. This however should in no way be associated with the National Spiritual Assembly's Annual Reports, as it gives the misleading impression that the Hands are an auxiliary of the National Assembly's activities . . .

“The Guardian hopes the Hands of the Cause, and the mem-

bers of their Auxiliary Boards, will bring these important matters forcibly to the attention of the friends." (The matters referred to are teaching on the homefront, importance of individual efforts and initiative, steps to be taken to teach effectively the Faith, and the importance of dispersal to new centers.)

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the Hands of the Cause in the United States, dated 30 May 1956)

"Supplementing this noble record of service have been the constant and fruitful efforts exerted by the Hands of the Cause, nominated from among the members of that community, in both the United States and the Holy Land, efforts that have lent a considerable impetus to the expansion and consolidation of the far-reaching enterprises initiated at the World Center of the Faith, and which have, particularly through the instrumentality of the recently appointed American Auxiliary Board, stimulated, to a noticeable extent the progress of the teaching work and the advancement of the Plan itself."

(From a letter written by the Guardian to the American Bahá'í Community, in message dated 19 July 1956, quoted in *Citadel of Faith*, p. 146)

"The Board members are responsible to all Hands of the Faith, in the given continent. The Board members should report to the Hands as a body, rather than to individual Hands.

"Similarly, the National Assemblies should correspond with the Hands as a body, rather than individual Hands."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the European Hands, dated 30 April 1957)

"Call upon Hands, National Assemblies, each continent separately, . . . exchange reports to be submitted by their respective Auxiliary Boards (and) national committees . . ."

(From the Guardian's cable to the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 4 June 1957)

"You will have seen, through the Guardian's recent cable, that he considers the work of the Hands of the Cause has now entered up-

on a new phase, and that, from now on, they must consider that their new function is the protection of the Faith from its internal and external enemies. The very progress the Cause is making all over the world is provoking the jealousy and antagonism of our enemies, outside the Faith, and of the Covenant-breakers and their supporters. In view of this, you, in cooperation with the Regional Assemblies and in conjunction with the members of the Auxiliary Board, must exchange information, consult upon these matters, and be ever on your guard to protect the sheep from the attack of the wolves. Any cases of disaffection which come to your attention should be reported to the Regional Assemblies, and they should likewise report such cases to you immediately. A watchful eye must be constantly kept on those who are known to be enemies, or to have been put out of the Faith."

(From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the Hands of the Cause of God in Africa, dated 7 June 1957)

"The Hands of the Cause of God, and the members of their Auxiliary Board should encourage the friends to contribute to their respective National Funds."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Hands of the Cause of God in Asia, dated 7 June 1957)

"This latest addition to the band of the high-ranking officers of a fast evolving World Administrative Order, involving a further expansion of the august institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, calls for, in view of the recent assumption by them of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith, the appointment of these same Hands, in each continent separately, of an additional Auxiliary Board, equal in membership to the existing one, and charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith, thereby complementing the function of the original Board, whose duty will henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan."

(From a letter written by the Guardian to the Bahá'í World, dated October 1957)

On 25 October 1957 Dr. Giachery cabled the Guardian as fol-

lows: "... European Hands beg instructions if any member existing Board can be assigned Protection and some new appointees Teaching ..."

On 29 October 1957 the Guardian replied: "No objection change Board members."

From the Universal House of Justice

"The Hands of the Cause at their London Conclave last May decided that Auxiliary Board Members should be free of administrative responsibilities in order to devote their full energies to their work as Board Members. Those Board Members serving on National Assemblies were therefore requested to decide, before Ridván 1964, in which capacity they could best serve the Cause.

"In view of this request made by the Hands of the Cause to their Auxiliary Board Members, the Universal House of Justice has reached the following decisions:

1. National Assemblies in whose areas of jurisdiction Board Members reside, should point out to the delegates at Convention that whilst teaching and administrative duties are not mutually exclusive, it is desirable that Auxiliary Board Members, whether for teaching or protection, be left free to concentrate on the work allotted to them by the Hands of the Cause in each Continent. The following extract from the Guardian's letter, written through his secretary, could be shared with the delegates for their guidance when casting their votes:

'Teachers of the Cause can surely become members of any Assembly or committee. There should be no incapacity attached to them. But, Shoghi Effendi would just prefer to see them devote all their time to teaching and leave the administrative functions for those who cannot serve as teachers.' (*Bahá'í News*, October 1932)

2. Should Board Members still be elected on National Assemblies after the above explanation, it should rest with each Board Member to decide which of the two functions he feels best suited to perform. The Universal House of Justice, there-

fore, approves the request made by the Hands of the Cause to their Board Members that they choose between the two functions.

3. In the event of the resignation of Auxiliary Board Members from National Assemblies, this should be considered as good reason for resignation. If, however, the National Assembly, in view of special conditions, should consider such resignations to be detrimental to the interests of the Faith in that National Community, and the Board Member should insist upon resigning on the grounds of his membership on the Board, the matter should be at once referred to the Universal House of Justice by the National Spiritual Assembly for examination and final decision. Pending such a decision, the Board Member should continue his membership on the National Assembly, and explain his position to the Hands of the Cause in his continent.

4. Measures will have to be taken by National Assemblies according to normal procedure to fill any vacancies created in this way. If the vacancy is recognized while Convention is still in session, a by-election could be arranged before Convention disbands."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 25 November 1963)

"19. We feel that Board Members should be appointed by the continental Hands in consultation. In other words, Hands should not only be given the opportunity to comment to the contrary on a suggested appointment but should be given opportunity to offer positive suggestions in consultation, even if the consultation is handled by post . . .

"21. We appreciate the action the Hands have taken in providing for the holding of conferences with Members of the Auxiliary Boards in the various continents.

"22. We think it desirable to invite National Assembly members to meet with Board Members at such conferences, provid-

ed it does not prevent the Board Members from having their own meetings with the Hands."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Hands of the Cause of God, dated 7 November 1964)

"Members of Auxiliary Boards should be freed from administrative responsibilities including serving on Committees and as delegates to conventions. In the event of any member of a National Assembly accepting appointment to a Board, the National Assembly should accept this as valid reason for that member's resignation from the Assembly; should a Board Member be elected to a National Assembly, he must choose on which body he will serve."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í World, dated November 1964)

"In some cases the Hands of the Faith have requested or authorized Board Members to sit in on all or almost all sessions of some particular National Assembly or National Committee. The House of Justice considers this improper. The Board Member should not act as a tenth non-voting member of a National Assembly. The National Assembly and its Committees should hold their own sessions amongst their own members in the proper and normal way.

"As some of you have correctly pointed out, however, Board Members need the assistance of National Assemblies in arranging teaching tours, and Board Members can be authorized to contact National Assemblies, as a routine procedure, requesting them to arrange such tours. Nevertheless, matters of principle or of importance which are not routine detail should go through the Hands in the ordinary way. Hands can, of course, deputize a Board Member to meet with a National Assembly for a specific purpose, but this should not be a general deputization to sit in on all meetings automatically."

(From a letter written by the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, to the Hands of the Cause of God, dated 2 June 1965. [This letter was sent to the Hands of the Cause after the Hands in the Holy Land checked its text with the Universal House of Justice.])

“Careful consideration has been given to the points you raised in your letter regarding the method of cooperation between Auxiliary Board Members and the administrative institutions of the Faith in your Region. The principle involved is that whilst the closest relationship should exist and be fostered between the Hands of the Cause and their Auxiliary Boards, on the one hand, and the National Spiritual Assembly with its committees on the other, Board Members should not be appointed on national committees, as voting or non-voting members. This was the intent of our statement dated November, 1964 addressed to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world, from which we quote: ‘Members of Auxiliary Boards should be freed from administrative responsibilities including serving on committees . . .’ This is a principle universally applicable to all countries, whether mass conversion areas or not, and is directly linked with the overall goal of the Nine-Year Plan for the development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause, as pointed out in our message of November, 1964 to the Bahá’ís of the world.

“Obviously there must be efficient and easy methods of communication to keep the Board Members informed of all developments and needs. You should refer this matter to the Hands in your Continent with your views. Some Continental Hands, for example, have requested National Spiritual Assemblies to send additional copies of important national committee reports which deal with the teaching work, to the Hands in their Continent for the use of Board Members. In fact, in some areas it has been arranged that National Spiritual Assemblies send copies of such reports directly to the Board Members involved. Furthermore, in one of the continents whenever the help of a Board Member in a local matter is required, the Hands of that continent have requested the National Spiritual Assemblies to send on such occasions a copy of their letter to the Hands directly to the Board Member concerned. As you already know, Board Members submit their reports only to the Hands, who may share these reports with the National Spiritual Assemblies concerned, with any views the Hands may have. In this connection it should be made quite clear that, as a general principle, Auxiliary Board Members are not only free, but are urged, in accordance with the writings of the beloved Guardian, to have direct contact with the individual friends, as well as the Local Spiritual Assemblies. It is at this very founda-

tion of the administrative structure of the Faith, where so often we find, alas, weakness and inefficiency."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda and Central Africa, dated 15 December 1965)

"We have reviewed the several questions you have raised in your letter of 21 January 1966 concerning the eligibility of Auxiliary Board members for election to local Spiritual Assemblies, as delegates to the national Convention, and to the National Spiritual Assembly.

"In all three areas of election, Auxiliary Board members are eligible to be elected. Therefore, a ballot should not be invalidated because it contains the name of a member of an Auxiliary Board. The basic principle involved is that the Board member himself must decide whether or not to accept his election. As you have stated in your letter, if the membership in a Bahá'í community drops to nine, including the Auxiliary Board member resident there, the Auxiliary Board member may serve temporarily as a member of the Assembly to preserve its Assembly status.

"In the case of election of an Auxiliary Board member to the National Spiritual Assembly should he choose to remain on the Auxiliary Board, he must resign from the National Assembly and section 12, Article VIII of the National By-laws would apply. Should he be elected as a delegate to the national Convention and choose to accept his election, he must then resign from membership on the Auxiliary Board. Whether elected to the National Assembly or as a delegate to the national Convention, a Board Member should be allowed a reasonable time to make his choice and should feel no compulsion to resign immediately after the results of the election are announced."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the NSA of the United States, dated 25 March 1966)

"We have your letter of 30 March 1966 inquiring about the status of Auxiliary Board Members in relation to Bahá'í elections.

"Members of the Auxiliary Board are eligible to be elected to any administrative post, but they cannot serve both in an admin-

istrative capacity (for example, as a member of a National Assembly) and as a member of the Auxiliary Board. Should they be elected to serve on an administrative body, they must then choose whether they will continue as a member of the Auxiliary Board or whether they feel they can best serve the Cause in the administrative post to which they have been elected.

“All adult Bahá’ís, including members of the Auxiliary Board, are eligible to vote in elections for delegates or in elections for members of the Local Spiritual Assembly.”

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the NSA of Uganda and Central Africa, dated 10 April 1966)

“We have your letter of September 10th inquiring as to procedure for investigating certain details with regard to pioneers.

“As you know, a National Committee should not correspond directly with Board Members in their official capacity. As you are already under the jurisdiction of the National Assembly of the United States, any request for the services of a Board Member should be directed to the National Assembly with a request that they refer the matter to the Hands of the continent involved.

“As you know, you also have the authority to write directly to any National Assembly to obtain information which you require in the discharge of your functions.”

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Pioneer Committee for the Americas, dated 23 September 1966)

“The Auxiliary Boards for Protection and Propagation will henceforth report to the Continental Boards of Counselors who will appoint or replace members of the Auxiliary Boards as circumstances may require. Such appointments and replacements as may be necessary in the initial stages will take place after consultation with the Hand or Hands previously assigned to the continent or zone.”

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá’ís of the World, dated 24 June 1968)

“10. Auxiliary Boards

- (a) The two Boards for Teaching and Protection will remain

distinct, and their functions will be unchanged.

(b) Auxiliary Board members presently serving in an executive capacity will cease to function in that capacity.

(c) The number of Auxiliary Board members to be assigned to each continental zone is as follows:

	Protection	Propagation
AFRICA		
Northwestern	3	6
Central and East	4	7
Southern	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>
	9	18
AMERICA		
North	4	9
Central	2	8
South	<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>
	9	27
ASIA		
Western	4	15
Southeastern	2	7
Northeastern	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>
	7	29
AUSTRALASIA		
	2	7
EUROPE		
9	18	

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to Continental Boards of Counselors for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith, dated 24 June 1968)

"We have your letter of 28 November, 1968, informing us of the appointment of . . . as a member of the Auxiliary Board, and raising the question as to whether the Continental Boards of Counselors should consult with National Spiritual Assemblies before appointing Auxiliary Board members from the membership of a National Spiritual Assembly.

"Inasmuch as the appointee himself must decide whether or not he can accept the appointment we see no necessity for a Continental Board of Counselors to consult with National Spiritual Assemblies, except in very exceptional circumstances, and in such instances it is within the discretion of the Continental Board of Counselors as to whether they will do so.

"However, the appointee is free to consult with his National Spiritual Assembly as to whether or not he should accept the appointment to the Auxiliary Board.

"The time for making appointments to Auxiliary Boards is also left to the discretion of the Continental Board of Counselors."

(From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, dated 17 December 1968)

Augmentation of Membership of Continental Boards of Counselors

10 July 1969

To: National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

With great joy we announce that we have decided to increase the total number of members of the Continental Boards of Counselors for the Protection and Propagation of the Faith to thirty-eight by adding John McHenry III to the Continental Board of Counselors in North East Asia and Mas'úd Khamsí to the Continental Board of Counselors in South America, raising the number of Counselors on each Board to three and four, respectively.

We also rejoice to announce the appointment of Mrs. Shirin Boman to the Continental Board of Counselors of Western Asia to fill a vacancy on that Board.

The devoted efforts of all eleven Continental Boards of Coun-

selors during the first year of their service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have been most exemplary and praiseworthy. We are deeply grateful for the loyalty, steadfastness and devotion which have characterized the activities of all members in reinforcing the vitally important work of the Hands of the Cause of God.

Please share these glad tidings with the friends.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Work of Continental Boards of Counselors and Auxiliary Board Members

1 October 1969

To: The Continental Boards of Counselors
and National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

A number of questions have been raised concerning the work of the Counselors and Auxiliary Board members, and it has been suggested that Auxiliary Board members be permitted to work regularly with National Spiritual Assemblies and national committees. We have carefully considered again the various factors involved and have decided that we must uphold the principle that such direct consultations should be exceptional rather than the rule.

It is the responsibility of Spiritual Assemblies, assisted by their committees, to organize and direct the teaching work, and in doing so they must, naturally, also do all they can to stimulate and inspire the friends. It is, however, inevitable that the Assemblies and committees, being burdened with the administration of the teaching work as well as with all other aspects of Bahá'í community life, will be unable to spend as much time as they would wish on stimulating the believers.

Authority and direction flow from the Assemblies, whereas the power to accomplish the tasks resides primarily in the entire body of the believers. It is the principal task of the Auxiliary Boards to assist in arousing and releasing this power. This is a vital activity,

and if they are to be able to perform it adequately they must avoid becoming involved in the work of administration. For example, when Auxiliary Board members arouse believers to pioneer, any believer who expresses his desire to do so should be referred to the appropriate committee which will then organize the project. Counselors and Auxiliary Board members should not, themselves, organize pioneering or travel teaching projects. Thus it is seen that the Auxiliary Boards should work closely with the grass roots of the community: the individual believers, groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies, advising, stimulating and assisting them. The Counselors are responsible for stimulating, counseling and assisting National Spiritual Assemblies, and also work with individuals, groups and Local Assemblies.

It is always possible, of course, for Counselors to depute an Auxiliary Board member to meet with a National Spiritual Assembly for a particular purpose, but this should not become a regular practice. Similarly, if the National Spiritual Assembly agrees, it may be advisable for an Auxiliary Board member to meet occasionally with a national committee to clarify the situation in the area and share information and ideas thoroughly. But this also should not become regular. Were it to do so there would be grave danger of inhibiting the proper working of these two institutions, vitiating and undermining the collaboration that must essentially exist between the Continental Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies. It would diffuse the energies and time of the Auxiliary Board members through their becoming involved in the administration of teaching. It could lead to the Auxiliary Board member's gradually taking over the direction of the national committee, usurping the function of the National Assembly, or to his becoming merely a traveling teacher sent hither and thither at the direction of the committee or National Assembly.

It is, of course, vital that information be shared fully and promptly, as has been explained in the compilation on the work of Auxiliary Board members that was circulated on March 25, 1969.¹ The ways of ensuring this should be worked out by the Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies and methods may vary from area to area.

Reports and recommendations for action, however, are quite

1. See pp. 19-36.

different. Auxiliary Board members should send theirs to the Counselors and not to National Assemblies or national committees directly. It is possible that the Counselors may reject or modify the recommendation; or, if they accept it and pass it on to the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Assembly may decide to refuse it. For an Auxiliary Board member to make recommendations directly to a national committee would lose the benefit of knowledge and experience in a wider field than that of which the Auxiliary Board member is aware, and would short-circuit and undermine the authority of both the Counselors and the National Assembly.

Similarly, although an Auxiliary Board member can and should receive information from the National Assemblies and national committees, his primary source of information about the community should be his own direct contacts with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups and individual believers. In this way the Counselors as well as the National Spiritual Assemblies have the benefit of two independent sources of information about the community: through the Auxiliary Board members on the one hand, and through the national committees on the other.

Assemblies sometimes misunderstand what is meant by the statement that Counselors and Auxiliary Board members are concerned with the teaching work and not with administration. It is taken to mean that they may not give advice on administrative matters. This is quite wrong. One of the things that Counselors and Auxiliary Board members should watch and report on is the proper working of administrative institutions. The statement that they do not have anything to do with administration means, simply, that they do not administer. They do not direct or organize the teaching work nor do they adjudicate in matters of personal conflict or personal problems. All these activities fall within the sphere of responsibility of the Spiritual Assemblies. But if an Auxiliary Board member finds a Local Spiritual Assembly functioning incorrectly he should call its attention to the appropriate Texts; likewise if, in his work with the community, an Auxiliary Board member finds that the teaching work is being held up by inefficiency of national committees, he should report this in detail to the Counselors who will then decide whether to refer it to the National Spiritual Assembly concerned. Similarly, if the Counselors find that a National Spiritual Assembly is not functioning

properly, they should not hesitate to consult with the National Spiritual Assembly about this in a frank and loving way.

It is the Spiritual Assemblies who plan and direct the work, but these plans should be well known to the Counselors and Auxiliary Board members, because one of the ways in which they can assist the Assemblies is by urging the believers continually to support the plans of the Assemblies. If a National Spiritual Assembly has adopted one goal as preeminent in a year, the Auxiliary Board members should bear this in mind in all their contacts with the believers and should direct their attention to the plans of the National Assembly, and stimulate them to enthusiastically support them.

The Counselors in each continental zone have wide latitude in the carrying out of their work. Likewise they should give to each Auxiliary Board member considerable freedom of action within his own allocated area. Although the Counselors should regularly direct the work of the Auxiliary Board members, the latter should realize that they need not wait for direction; the nature of their work is such that they should be continually engaged in it according to their own best judgment, even if they are given no specific tasks to perform. Above all the Auxiliary Board members should build up a warm and loving relationship between themselves and the believers in their area so that the Local Spiritual Assemblies will spontaneously turn to them for advice and assistance.

We assure you all of our fervent prayers in the Holy Shrines for the blessings of Bahá'u'lláh upon the strenuous and highly meritorious services that you are performing with such devotion in His path.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Augmentation of Membership of Continental Boards of Counselors

Riḍván 1970

To: All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The following is the text of our message to the Bahá'í world which has been cabled to certain National Spiritual Assemblies:

Bahá'í world community entering seventh year Nine Year Plan has amply demonstrated ability scale heights devotion sacrifice win astonishing victories world redeeming world healing world uniting Faith. At this Ridván extend loving welcome eleven new National Spiritual Assemblies now forming seven in Africa one in Asia two in Australasia raising to ninetyfour number supporting pillars Universal House Justice. Moved pay loving tribute Hands Cause God their brilliant services blazing teaching trails surface planet uplifting advising Assemblies friends all continents. In view effective reinforcement this noble work by able dedicated Continental Boards Counselors their Auxiliary Boards together with growing need and expansion world community announce augmentation vital institution through appointment three additional Counselors Iraj Ayman Western Asia Anneliese Bopp Betty Reed Europe and authorization appointment fortyfive additional Auxiliary Board members nine Africa sixteen Asia two Australasia eighteen Western Hemisphere. Calling formation four National Spiritual Assemblies Ridván 1971 Lesotho seat Maseru Ivory Coast Mali and Upper Volta seat Abidjan Trinidad and Tobago seat Port of Spain Solomon Islands seat Honiara. Nine Year Plan already marked great achievements pioneering proclamation recognition Faith upsurge youth acquisition properties commencement construction Panama Temple developments World Center. Urgent immediate vital need concentrate attention increase number localities Local Spiritual Assemblies believers fill remaining pioneer posts. Last Ridván call raised sevenhundred and thirtythree pioneers minimum requirement. Fourhundred and seventynine specific posts still unfilled. Total victory requires more pioneers more funds more new believers. Hands Cause Counselors Board members National Local Spiritual Assemblies every single follower Bahá'u'lláh summoned utmost effort remaining years Nine Year Plan. Achievement this step Master's Divine Plan will endow community capacity administrative agencies undertake next stage implementation supreme purpose Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation unification mankind establishment long promised Kingdom God this Earth. Assure ardent loving prayers Holy Shrines.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Relationship of Hands of the Cause and Continental Boards of Counselors

24 April 1972

To the Continental Boards of Counselors
and National Spiritual Assemblies

Beloved Friends,

Recently we have received queries from several sources about the nature of the Institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors and its relationship to the Institution of the Hands of the Cause, and we feel it is timely for us to give further elucidation.

As with so many aspects of the Administrative Order, understanding of this subject will develop and clarify with the passage of time as that Order grows organically in response to the power and guidance of Almighty God and in accordance with the needs of a rapidly developing worldwide community. However, certain aspects are already so clear as to require a proper understanding by the friends.

In the Kitáb-i-‘Ahdí (the Book of His Covenant) Bahá’u’lláh wrote “Blessed are the rulers and the learned in Al-Bahá,” and referring to this very passage the beloved Guardian wrote on 4 November 1931:

“In this holy cycle the ‘learned’ are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and, on the other, the teachers and diffusers of His teachings who do not rank as Hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the ‘rulers’ they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice. The duties of each of these souls will be determined in the future.” (Translated from the Persian).

The Hands of the Cause of God, the Counselors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards fall within the definition of the “learned” given by the beloved Guardian. Thus they are all intimately interrelated and it is not incorrect to refer to the three ranks collectively as one institution.

However, each is also a separate institution in itself. The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God was brought into existence in the time of Bahá’u’lláh and when the Administrative Order was proclaimed and formally established by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

in His Will, it became an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship. The Auxiliary Boards, in their turn, were brought into being by Shoghi Effendi as an auxiliary institution of the Hands of the Cause.

When, following the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice decided that it could not legislate to make possible the appointment of further Hands of the Cause, it became necessary for it to create a new institution, appointed by itself, to extend into the future the functions of protection and propagation vested in the Hands of the Cause and, with that in view, so to develop the Institution of the Hands that it could nurture the new institution and function in close collaboration with it as long as possible. It was also vital so to arrange matters as to make the most effective use of the unique services of the Hands themselves.

The first step in this development was taken in November 1964 when the Universal House of Justice formally related the Institution of the Hands to itself by stating that "Responsibility for decisions on matters of general policy affecting the institution of the Hands of the Cause, which was formerly exercised by the beloved Guardian, now devolves upon the Universal House of Justice as the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn." At that time the number of members of the Auxiliary Boards was increased from 72 to 135, and the Hands of the Cause in each continent were called upon to appoint one or more members of their Auxiliary Boards to act in an executive capacity on behalf of and in the name of each Hand, thereby assisting him in carrying out his work.

In June 1968 the Institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors was brought into being, fulfilling the goal of extending the aforementioned functions of the Hands into the future, and this momentous decision was accompanied by the next step in the development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause: the continental Hands were to serve henceforth on a worldwide basis and operate individually in direct relationship to the Universal House of Justice; the Hands ceased to be responsible for the direction of the Auxiliary Boards, which became an auxiliary institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors; the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land were given the task of acting as liaison between the Universal House of Justice and the Boards of Counselors; and the working interrelationships between the Hands and the

Boards of Counselors were established. Reference was also made to the future establishment by the Universal House of Justice, with the assistance of the Hands residing in the Holy Land, of an international teaching center in the Holy Land.

In July 1969 and at Riḍván 1970 further increases in the numbers of Counselors and Auxiliary Board members were made.

Other developments in the Institution of the Hands of the Cause and the Institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors will no doubt take place in future as the international teaching center comes into being and as the work of the Counselors expands.

We have noted that the Hands, the Counselors and the Auxiliary Boards are sometimes referred to by the friends as the "appointive arm" of the Administrative Order in contradistinction to the Universal House of Justice and the National and Local Assemblies which constitute the "elective arm." While there is truth in this description as it applies to the method used in the creation of these institutions, the friends should understand that it is not only the fact of appointment that particularly distinguishes the institutions of the Hands, Counselors and Auxiliary Boards. There are, for instance, many more believers appointed to committees in the "elective arm" than are serving in the so-called "appointive arm." A more striking distinction is that whereas the "rulers" in the Cause function as corporate bodies, the "learned" operate primarily as individuals.

In a letter written on 14 March 1927 to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Istanbul, the Guardian's Secretary explained, on his behalf, the principle in the Cause of action by majority vote. He pointed out how, in the past, it was certain individuals who "accounted themselves as superior in knowledge and elevated in position" who caused division, and that it was those "who pretended to be the most distinguished of all" who "always proved themselves to be the source of contention." "But praise be to God" he continued, "that the Pen of Glory has done away with the unyielding and dictatorial views of the learned and the wise, dismissed the assertions of individuals as an authoritative criterion, even though they were recognized as the most accomplished and learned among men and ordained that all matters be referred to authorized centers and specified assemblies. Even so, no assembly has been invested with the absolute authority to deal with such general matters as affect the interests of nations. Nay rather,

He has brought all the assemblies together under the shadow of one House of Justice, one divinely-appointed Center, so that there would be only one Center and all the rest integrated into a single body, revolving around one expressly-designated Pivot, thus making them all proof against schism and division." (Translated from the Persian).

Having permanently excluded the evils admittedly inherent in the institutions of the "learned" in past dispensations, Bahá'u'lláh has nevertheless embodied in His Administrative Order the beneficent elements which exist in such institutions, elements which are of fundamental value for the progress of the Cause, as can be gauged from even a cursory reading of the Guardian's message of 4 June 1957.

The existence of institutions of such exalted rank, comprising individuals who play such a vital role, who yet have no legislative, administrative or judicial authority, and are entirely devoid of priestly functions or the right to make authoritative interpretations, is a feature of Bahá'í administration unparalleled in the religions of the past. The newness and uniqueness of this concept make it difficult to grasp; only as the Bahá'í Community grows and the believers are increasingly able to contemplate its administrative structure uninfluenced by concepts from past ages, will the vital interdependence of the "rulers" and the "learned" in the Faith be properly understood, and the inestimable value of their interaction be fully recognized.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Establishment of International Teaching Center

5 June 1973

To All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The following cable has just been sent to the United States for publication in "Bahá'í News." Please share it with the believers in your area:

Announce establishment Holy Land long anticipated International Teaching Center destined evolve into one those world shaking world embracing world directing administrative institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá elucidated by Shoghi Effendi. Membership this nascent institution comprises all Hands Cause God and initially three Counselors who with Hands present Holy Land will constitute nucleus its vital operations. Calling upon Hooper Dunbar Florence Mayberry 'Aziz Yazdí proceed Holy Land assume this highly meritorious service. Offering prayers heartfelt gratitude Sacred Threshold this further evidence organic evolution Administrative Order Bahá'u'lláh.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

**Duties of International Teaching Center/
Appointment of Additional
Continental Boards of Counselors**

8 June 1973

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The centennial year of the revelation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas has already witnessed events of such capital significance in the annals of the Bahá'í Dispensation as to cause us to contemplate with awe the rapidity with which Divine Providence is advancing the Cause of the Most Great Name. The time is indeed propitious for the establishment of the International Teaching Center, a development which, at one and the same time, brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future, links the institution of the Boards of Counselors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice.

This International Teaching Center now established will, in due course, operate from that building designated by the Guardian as the Seat for the Hands of the Cause, which must be raised on the

are on Mount Carmel in close proximity to the Seat of the Universal House of Justice.

The duties now assigned to this nascent institution are:

To coordinate, stimulate and direct the activities of the Continental Boards of Counselors and to act as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice.

To be fully informed of the situation of the Cause in all parts of the world and to be able, from the background of this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counselors.

To be alert to possibilities, both within and without the Bahá'í community, for the extension of the teaching work into receptive or needy areas, and to draw the attention of the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counselors to such possibilities, making recommendations for action.

To determine and anticipate needs for literature, pioneers and traveling teachers and to work out teaching plans, both regional and global, for the approval of the Universal House of Justice.

All the Hands of the Cause of God will be members of the International Teaching Center. Each Hand will be kept regularly informed of the activities of the Center through reports or copies of its minutes, and will be able, wherever he may be residing or traveling, to convey suggestions, recommendations and information to the Center and, whenever he is in the Holy Land, to take part in the consultations and other activities of the Center.

In addition, we now appoint Mr. Hooper Dunbar, Mrs. Florence Mayberry and Mr. 'Azíz Yazdí to membership of the International Teaching Center, with the rank of Counselor. These believers, who have been serving with distinction on the Continental Boards of Counselors in South America, North America and Central and East Africa respectively, will henceforth reside in Haifa and will, together with the Hands present in the Holy Land, constitute the nucleus of the operations of the Center.

Authority for the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-

breakers remains with the Hands of the Cause of God. All such matters will be investigated locally by the relative Continental Board of Counselors in consultation with any Hand or Hands who may be in the area. The Continental Board of Counselors and the Hands concerned will then make their reports to the International Teaching Center where they will be considered. The decision whether or not to expel or reinstate will be made by the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land who will, as at present, submit their decision to the Universal House of Justice for approval.

The following changes to the zones of the Continental Boards of Counselors are now made:

The number of zones has been raised to twelve by the removal of India, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Laccadive, Maldives, Andaman and Nicobar Islands from the zone of Western Asia to constitute the new zone of South Central Asia.

The Philippines, Hong Kong and Macau are transferred from North-eastern Asia to South-eastern Asia.

The Caroline Islands and all other Pacific islands lying north of the equator and between longitudes 140° east and 140° west, with the exception of the Gilbert Islands, will be transferred from the zone of Australasia to the zone of North-eastern Asia. Islands under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska remain in the zone of North America.

The number of Counselors is now raised to fifty-seven by the appointment of Mr. Friday Ekpe and Mr. Zekrollah Kazemi in North-western Africa, Mr. Húshang Ahdieh and Mr. Peter Vuyiya in Central and East Africa, Dr. Sarah Pereira and Mrs. Velma Sherrill in North America, Mr. Rowland Estall and Mr. Paul Lucas in Central America, Mrs. Leonora Armstrong, Mr. Peter McLaren and Mr. Raúl Pavón in South America, Mr. Dipchand Khianra and Mrs. Zena Sorabjee in South Central Asia, Mr. Firaydún Mitháqíyán in South-eastern Asia, Mr. Richard Benson and Miss Elena Marsella in North-eastern Asia and Miss Violet Hoehnke in Australasia. Dr. William Maxwell who has been rendering distinguished service as a member of the Continental

Board of Counselors in North-western Africa has been obliged to return to the United States.

Mrs. Zena Sorabjee is appointed Trustee of the new Continental Fund of South Central Asia, while Mr. Húshang Ahdieh and Mr. Mas'úd Khamsí are appointed the new Trustees of the Continental Funds of Central and East Africa and South America respectively.

Beyond these significant developments at the World Center of the Faith and on the continental level, it is becoming increasingly necessary in many parts of the world for the Auxiliary Boards to be reinforced. The nature of the work differs from zone to zone and the Universal House of Justice is now consulting the Boards of Counselors on this matter before making an announcement.

The decisions now announced are the outcome of deliberation extending over a number of years, reinforced by consultations with the Hands of the Cause of God, and especially with the Hands residing in the Holy Land who were requested in 1968 to assist the Universal House of Justice in the establishment of the International Teaching Center, a task that now increases in magnitude as that Center begins its work.

It is our fervent prayer that the Blessed Beauty will abundantly confirm this latest unfoldment of His divinely-purposed Administrative Order.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

ZONES OF THE CONTINENTAL BOARDS OF COUNSELORS AS REVISED BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE IN MAY 1973

1. North-western Africa

All the continent of Africa west of the eastern frontiers of Tunisia, Algeria, Niger and Nigeria plus the Cape Verde Islands.

2. Central and East Africa

All the continent of Africa east of the western frontiers of Libya, Chad and the United Cameroon Republic and north of the southern frontiers of Zaïre and Tanzania plus the islands of Fernando Póo, Príncipe, São Tomé and Annobón in the Atlantic Ocean and Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia Islands in the Indian Ocean.

3. *Southern Africa*

All the continent of Africa south of the northern frontiers of Angola, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique plus the Island of Madagascar and all islands in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans between longitudes 20° west and 80° east and south of the equator with the exception of the Islands of Annobón, Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mafia which are assigned to the zone of Central and East Africa.

4. *North America*

All the continent of America north of the southern frontier of the United States plus all offshore islands in the Pacific and Arctic Oceans including the Aleutian chain and all islands under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, also Greenland and all offshore islands politically belonging to Greenland, all islands in the Atlantic Ocean west of longitude 40° west and between latitude 60° north and the Tropic of Cancer plus those Bahama Islands lying south of the Tropic of Cancer.

5. *Central America*

All the continent of America south of the northern frontier of Mexico and north of the southern frontier of Panama plus the offshore islands in the Pacific Ocean belonging politically to countries of this zone plus Clipperton Island, all islands in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea south of the Tropic of Cancer except the Bahama Islands which are allocated to the zone of North America and islands belonging politically to Colombia and Venezuela, the islands of Curacao, Bonaire, Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago which are all allocated to the zone of South America.

6. *South America*

All the continent of South America, the Galápagos Islands, Curacao, Bonaire, Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, all islands in the Caribbean and North Atlantic Oceans belonging politically to countries of this zone plus all islands in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans south of the equator and between longitude 120° west and longitude 20° west.

7. *Western Asia*

All the continent of Asia west of the eastern boundaries of Pakistan, Sinkiang, the Mongolian Republic, the Oblasts of Chita

and Irkutsk and the Kray of Krasnoyarsk and east of the western boundaries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, plus those parts of Turkey and Kazakhstan which lie in Europe and including the Transcaucasian S.S.R.s of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as all islands in the Persian Gulf and islands in the Arabian Sea belonging politically to countries of this zone.

8. *South Central Asia*

India, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Laccadive, Maldivé, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

9. *South-eastern Asia*

China south of the northern boundaries of Yünnan, Szechwan, Hupeh, Anhwei and Kiangsu, as well as Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Macau. Excluding Portuguese Timor.

10. *North-eastern Asia*

All the Soviet Union east of the western boundary of the Yakutsk A.S.S.R. and the Oblast of Amur, China east of Sinkiang and north of the southern boundaries of Tsinghai, Kansu, Shensi, Honan and Shantung; Korea, Japan, Taiwan and all islands belonging politically to those nations plus all islands in the Pacific Ocean north of the equator and between the longitudes of 140° east and 140° west with the exception of the Gilbert Islands and those islands under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska, but including those Caroline Islands lying west of longitude 140° east.

11. *Australasia*

Australia and New Zealand plus all islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans lying south of the equator and between the longitudes of 80° east and 120° west including Portuguese Timor and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands but excepting Indonesia.

12. *Europe*

The entire continent of Europe less those portions of Kazakhstan and Turkey which lie in Europe, plus Iceland and all islands in the Atlantic Ocean north of latitude 60° north which belong politically to nations of the European continent plus all islands in the Atlantic Ocean east of longitude 40° west and between latitude 60° north and the Tropic of Cancer plus all islands of

the Mediterranean Sea including Cyprus but excluding islands belonging politically to nations of the African and Asiatic continents.

*MEMBERSHIP OF THE
CONTINENTAL BOARDS OF COUNSELORS,
ACCORDING TO THE NEW BOUNDARIES OF MAY 1973*

(New appointments are indicated with an asterisk.)

North-western Africa

Husayn Ardikání (Trustee of Continental Fund)

*Friday Epke

*Zekrollah Kazemi

Muhammad Kebdani

Central and East Africa

*Húshang Ahdieh (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Oloro Epyeru

Kolonario Oule

Isobel Sabri

Mihdí Samandarí

*Peter Vuyiya

Southern Africa

Seewoosumbur-Jeehoba Appa

Shidan Fat'he-Aazam (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Bahíyyih Winckler

North America

Lloyd Gardner

*Sarah Pereira

*Velma Sherrill

Edna True (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Central America

Carmen de Burafato

*Rowland Estall

Artemus Lamb

*Paul Lucas

Alfred Osborne (Trustee of Continental Fund)

South America

*Leonora Armstrong

Athos Costas
Mas'úd Khamsí (Trustee of Continental Fund)

*Peter McLaren

*Raúl Pavón

Donald Witzel

Western Asia

Iraj Ayman

Masīh Farhangí

Hádí Rahmání (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Manúchihir Salmánpúr

South Central Asia

Shirin Boman

*Dipchand Khianra

*Zena Sorabjee (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Sankaran-Nair Vasudevan

South-eastern Asia

*Firaydún Mítháqíyán

Khudárahm Paymán (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Vicente Samaniego

Chellie Sundram

Yan Kee Leong

North-eastern Asia

*Richard Benson

John McHenry III

*Elena Marsella

Rúhu'lláh Mumtází (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Australasia

Suhayl 'Alá'í

*Violet Hoehnke

Howard Harwood

Thelma Perks (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Europe

Erik Blumenthal

Anneliese Bopp

Dorothy Ferraby

Louis Hénuzet (Trustee of Continental Fund)

Betty Reed

Extension of Services of Auxiliary Boards

7 October 1973

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In order to meet the growing needs of an ever-expanding Bahá'í World Community we have taken two decisions designed to reinforce and extend the services of the Auxiliary Boards.

First, the number of Auxiliary Board members throughout the world is to be raised to two hundred and seventy, of whom eighty-one will serve on the Auxiliary Boards for the Protection of the Faith and one hundred and eighty-nine will serve on the Auxiliary Boards for the Propagation of the Faith. In all there will be fifty-four Auxiliary Board members in Africa, eighty-one in the Western Hemisphere, eighty-one in Asia, eighteen in Australasia and thirty-six in Europe.

Secondly, we have decided to take a further step in the development of the institution by giving to each Continental Board of Counselors the discretion to authorize individual Auxiliary Board members to appoint assistants. Such authorization does not have to be given to all the Auxiliary Board members in a zone nor does the number assigned have to be the same for all Board members; indeed certain Boards of Counselors may decide that the present circumstances in their zones do not require them to take advantage of this possibility. Such matters are left entirely to the discretion of each Continental Board of Counselors.

The exact nature of the duties and the duration of the appointment of the assistants is also left to each Continental Board to decide for itself. Their aims should be to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assembly members to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow-believers' understanding of the Teachings, and generally to assist the Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties. Appointments may be made for a limited period, such as a year or two, with the possibility of reappointment. Believers can serve at the same time

both as assistants to Auxiliary Board members and on administrative institutions.

It is our prayer at the Sacred Threshold that this new development in the institution of the Auxiliary Boards will lead to an unprecedented strengthening of the Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

NUMBERS OF AUXILIARY BOARD MEMBERS BY ZONES—OCTOBER 1973

	Auxiliary Board for Protection	Auxiliary Board for Propagation
AFRICA		
North-western	3	9
Central and East	13	19
Southern	2	8
	18	36
WESTERN HEMISPHERE		
North America	9	18
Central America	9	9
South America	9	27
	27	54
ASIA		
Western	9	18
South Central	3	15
	18	63
South-eastern	3	15
North-eastern	3	15
AUSTRALASIA		
	9	9
EUROPE		
	9	27
	81	189

Expansion of Continental Boards of Counselors and Auxiliary Boards in Africa

6 January 1975

To All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

. . . The mighty potentialities for growth and expansion in the western regions of Africa are such as to justify a corresponding development of the institution of the Continental Boards of Counselors in that vast and promising area. The decision has been taken, therefore, after consultation with the International Teaching Center, to break the present zone of North-western Africa into two separate zones of Northern and Western Africa, to each of which will be transferred parts of the Central and East African zone. The zone of Northern Africa will comprise Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Spanish Sahara. The zone of Western Africa will consist of Mauritania, Sénégal, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the Cape Verde Islands, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Niger, Ghana, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Because of the creation of a new Board for Northern Africa, the Counselors in this and the one for Western Africa must be regrouped, new appointments made to the Northern Board, and the number of Auxiliary Board members increased. We decided, therefore, that the Board for Northern Africa will consist of Mr. Muḥammad Kebdani, already serving as a Counselor, Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, and Mr. 'Imád Šábirán. The Board for Western Africa will consist of Mr. Ḥusayn Ardikání (Trustee), Mr. Friday Ekpe, Mr. Zekrollah Kazemi, and Dr. Mihdí Samandarí (transferred from the Central and East African Board).

We are also increasing the number of Auxiliary Board members in Africa, adding 9 members to the Board for Protection, and 9 to that for Propagation, bringing the totals for that continent to 27 and 45 respectively, allocated according to the following schedule:

	Auxiliary Board members for Protection	Auxiliary Board members for Propagation
Central and East Africa	13	19
Southern Africa	4	10
Northern Africa	5	5
Western Africa	5	11
	27	45

We pray at the Holy Shrines that these decisions, which reflect the growth of our beloved Faith in Africa, will pave the way for speedier progress, wider expansion and greater consolidation, as the friends of that mighty continent forge ahead in their efforts to promote and protect the precious Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Collaboration between Auxiliary Board Members and National and Regional Teaching Committees

6 July 1977

To All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Collaboration between Auxiliary Board Members and National and Regional Teaching Committees

It has become apparent that in some areas the progress of the teaching work requires closer collaboration between Auxiliary Board members and National or Regional Teaching Committees than heretofore. Following consultation with the International Teaching Center on the matter, we have concluded that the possibilities provided by the present policy are adequate and that where a lack of collaboration has been felt it has arisen from an

insufficiently full and frequent exchange of information between the institutions.

While the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants should never attempt to direct the work of committees or become involved in the administrative work associated with the committees' functions, it is absolutely vital that they be kept fully informed of the committees' activities and plans and their hopes for the work in the area. Only then can the members of the Auxiliary Boards be confident that the services to which they are exhorting the believers and the projects in which they are encouraging them are in harmony with the overall plans and objectives of the National Spiritual Assembly and its committees.

The existing policy and the reasons for it were conveyed to the Continental Boards of Counselors and all National Spiritual Assemblies in our letter of 1 October 1969, a copy of which is attached.² It should be noted that under this policy it is permissible and highly desirable to have a direct and regular exchange of information between the committees and the Auxiliary Board members. Moreover, at the outset of the work of the year or at times during the year when new plans are being evolved, it is often helpful to arrange for consultations to be held between the Auxiliary Board members and the National or Regional Teaching Committees before such plans are finalized.

We are confident that a greater awareness of the importance of close collaboration between the two arms of the Administrative Order and of the ways available to achieve this will lead to a much-needed intensification of the teaching work in every land.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

2. See pp. 37-40.

Elucidation of Relationship between Continental Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies

27 March 1978

To All National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

One of the believers wrote recently to the Universal House of Justice requesting an elucidation of a statement made by it in one of its letters about the relationship between the Boards of Counselors and National Spiritual Assemblies. The House of Justice instructed us to send the following reply, which is now being shared with all National Assemblies as it will undoubtedly be of interest to the believers in general.

The statement that the Boards of Counselors outrank the National Institutions of the Faith has a number of implications. A Board of Counselors has the particular responsibility of caring for the protection and propagation of the Faith throughout a continental zone which contains a number of national Bahá'í communities. In performing these tasks it neither directs nor instructs the Spiritual Assemblies or individual believers, but it has the necessary rank to enable it to ensure that it is kept properly informed and that the Spiritual Assemblies give due consideration to its advice and recommendations. However, the essence of the relationships between Bahá'í institutions is loving consultation and a common desire to serve the Cause of God rather than a matter of rank or station.

It is clear from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as from those of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the interpretations of the Guardian, that the proper functioning of human society requires the preservation of ranks and classes within its membership. The friends should recognize this without envy or jealousy, and those who occupy ranks should never exploit their position or regard themselves as being superior to others. About this Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“And amongst the realms of unity is the unity of rank and station. It redoundeth to the exaltation of the Cause, glorifying it among all peoples. Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It

hath become desolate. Those who have quaffed from the ocean of divine utterance and fixed their gaze upon the Realm of Glory should regard themselves as being on the same level as the others and in the same station. Were this matter to be definitely established and conclusively demonstrated through the power and might of God, the world would become as the Abhá Paradise.

“Indeed, man is noble, inasmuch as each one is a repository of the sign of God. Nevertheless, to regard oneself as superior in knowledge, learning or virtue, or to exalt oneself or seek preference, is a grievous transgression. Great is the blessedness of those who are adorned with the ornament of this unity and have been graciously confirmed by God.”

In similar vein, Shoghi Effendi gave this warning to those who are elected to serve on National Spiritual Assemblies:

“They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavor, by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candor, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win, not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they serve, but also their esteem and real affection.”

Courtesy, reverence, dignity, respect for the rank and achievements of others are virtues which contribute to the harmony and well-being of every community, but pride and self-aggrandizement are among the most deadly of sins.

The House of Justice hopes that all the friends will remember that the ultimate aim in life of every soul should be to attain spiritual excellence—to win the good pleasure of God. The true spiritual station of any soul is known only to God. It is quite a different thing from the ranks and stations that men and women occupy in the various sectors of society. Whoever has his eyes fixed on the goal of attaining the good pleasure of God will accept with joy and radiant acquiescence whatever work or station is assigned to him in the Cause of God, and will rejoice to serve Him under all conditions.

There are many passages on this theme in the Holy Writings,

and the Universal House of Justice hopes that these remarks will help the friends to turn to them and understand their purport.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Local Spiritual Assemblies and Supporting Role of Auxiliary Board Members and Their Assistants³

Naw-Rúz 1979

The National Spiritual Assemblies in consultation with the Counselors should avail themselves of the services of the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, who, together "with the traveling teachers selected by the Assembly or its Teaching Committees, should be continuously encouraged to conduct deepening courses . . . and to make regular visits to local Spiritual Assemblies."

The visitors, whether Auxiliary Board members, their assistants or traveling teachers "should meet on such occasions not only with the local Assembly but, of course, with the local community members, collectively at general meetings and even, if necessary, individually in their homes.

"The subjects to be discussed at such meetings with the local Assembly and the friends should include among others the following points:

1. the extent of the spread and stature of the Faith today;
2. the importance of the daily obligatory prayers (at least the short prayer);
3. the need to educate Bahá'í children in the Teachings of the Faith and encourage them to memorize some of the prayers;

3. This extract was part of a compilation on Local Spiritual Assemblies that accompanied the Naw-Rúz 1979 letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies.

4. the stimulation of youth to participate in community life by giving talks, etc. and having their own activities, if possible;

5. the necessity to abide by the laws of marriage, namely, the need to have a Bahá'í ceremony, to obtain the consent of parents, to observe monogamy; faithfulness after marriage; likewise the importance of abstinence from all intoxicating drinks and drugs;

6. the local Fund and the need for the friends to understand that the voluntary act of contributing to the Fund is both a privilege and a spiritual obligation. There should also be discussion of various methods that could be followed by the friends to facilitate their contributions and the ways open to the local Assembly to utilize its local Fund to serve the interests of its community and the Cause;

7. the importance of the Nineteen Day Feast and the fact that it should be a joyful occasion and rallying point of the entire community;

8. the manner of election with as many workshops as required, including teaching of simple methods of balloting for illiterates, such as having one central home as the place for balloting and arranging for one literate person, if only a child, to be present at that home during the whole day, if necessary;

9. last but not least, the all-important teaching work, both in the locality and its neighboring centers, as well as the need to continuously deepen the friends in the essentials of the Faith. The friends should be made to realize that in teaching the Faith to others they should not only aim at assisting the seeking soul to join the Faith, but also at making him a teacher of the Faith and its active supporter.

“All the above points should, of course, be stressed within the framework of the importance of the local Spiritual Assembly, which should be encouraged to vigorously direct its attention to these vital functions and become the very heart of the community life of its own locality, even if its meetings should become bur-

dened with the problems of the community. The local friends should understand the importance of the law of consultation and realize that it is to the local Spiritual Assembly that they should turn, abide by its decisions, support its projects, cooperate wholeheartedly with it in its task to promote the interests of the Cause, and seek its advice and guidance in the solution of personal problems and the adjudication of disputes, should any arise amongst the members of the community."

(From a letter dated 2 February 1966 to all
National Spiritual Assemblies Engaged in Mass
Teaching Work)

"It is at this local level of Bahá'í community life, the very foundation of the administrative structure of the Faith, that we so often find lack of adequate strength and efficiency. It is at this same level that our beloved Guardian urged Auxiliary Board Members to establish contact with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, isolated centers and the individual believers, and through periodic and systematic visits to localities as well as by correspondence help in promoting the interests of the Plan, assist in the efficient and prompt execution of the goals, watch over the security of the Faith, stimulate and strengthen the teaching and pioneer work, impress upon the friends the importance of individual effort, initiative and sacrifice, and encourage them to participate in Bahá'í activities and be unified under all circumstances."

(From a message dated 17 November 1971 to the
Continental Boards of Counselors)

The aims of the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, stated previously in relation to the services of the assistants, "should be to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assembly members to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow believers' understanding of the Teachings . . ."

(From a message dated 7 October 1973 to the
Bahá'ís of the World)

"We are confident that the institution of the Boards of Coun-

selors will lend its vital support and, through the Counselors' own contacts with the friends, through their Auxiliary Boards and their assistants, will nourish the roots of each local community, enrich and cultivate the soil of knowledge of the teachings and irrigate it with the living waters of love for Bahá'u'lláh. Thus will the saplings grow into mighty trees, and the trees bear their golden fruit."

(From a letter dated 25 May 1975 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Establishment of Terms of Continental Boards of Counselors

29 June 1979

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice asks that you kindly convey the following important announcement to the friends within your area of jurisdiction.

Moment propitious announce duration terms service members Continental Boards Counselors as anticipated in announcement establishment that institution and in Constitution Universal House of Justice. Decision now taken that terms will be of five years starting Day Covenant 26 November 1980. Supplicating Ancient Beauty divine blessings development this essential institution Bahá'í Administrative Order.

Universal House of Justice

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
Department of the Secretariat
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Further Development of Continental Boards of Counselors and Appointments for 1980-85

3 November 1980

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly-loved Friends,

One of the greatest sources of consolation for the Universal House of Justice amid the tribulations of the past twelve years, has been the establishment and growth of the Continental Boards of Counselors, and the assistance that this institution has been rendering, in ever-increasing measure, to the sound development of the worldwide Bahá'í community. We cannot pay too high a tribute to the indefatigable labors of the devoted souls who have been called upon to shoulder this onerous responsibility, and who have followed with such fidelity the path of self-sacrificing service that has been blazed for them by the beloved Hands of the Cause of God.

In June 1979 we were moved to announce that the duration of the terms of office of Continental Counselors would be five years, to start on the Day of the Covenant of this year. As this date approaches, we have decided that the time is ripe for a further step in the development of the institution itself that will, at one and the same time, accord greater discretion and freedom of action to the Continental Boards of Counselors in the carrying out of their duties, and widen the scope of each Board to embrace an entire continent. In accordance with this decision, the zones of the Continental Boards of Counselors will, from the Day of the Covenant of the year 137 (26 November 1980), be as follows:

1. Africa, comprising the areas of the four present zones of that continent.
2. The Americas, comprising the present zones of North, Central and South America.
3. Asia, comprising the present zones of Western, South Central and South-eastern Asia, together with the present zone of North-eastern Asia without the Hawaiian Islands and Micronesia.
4. Australasia, comprising the present zone of Australasia plus the Hawaiian Islands and Micronesia.
5. Europe.

Those who are now appointed as Counselors to serve on these Continental Boards for the next five years are:

Africa: Dr. Húshang Ahdieh (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Husayn Ardekání, Mr. Friday Ekpe, Mr. Oloro Epyeru, Mr. Shidan Fat'he-Aazam, Mr. Zekrollah Kazemi, Mr. Muḥammad Kebdani, Mrs. Thelma Khelghati, Mr. William Masehla, Mr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, Mr. Kolonario Oule, Mrs. Isobel Sabri, Dr. Mihdí Samandarí, Mr. Peter Vuyiya, Mrs. Bahíyyih Winckler.

The Americas: Dr. Hidáyatu'lláh Aḥmadiyyih, Dr. Farzam Arbáb, Mrs. Carmen de Burafato, Mr. Athos Costas, Mr. Angus Cowan, Mr. Lloyd Gardner (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Mas'úd Kḥamsí, Mrs. Lauretta King, Mr. Artemus Lamb, Mr. Peter McLaren, Mr. Raúl Pavón, Dr. Sarah Pereira, Mrs. Ruth Pringle, Mr. Fred Schechter, Mrs. Velma Sherrill, Mr. Donald Witzel.

Asia: Mr. Burhání'd-Dín Afshín, Mrs. Shirin Boman, Dr. Masih Farhangí, Dr. John Fozdar, Mr. Zabíhu'lláh Gulmuḥammadí, Mr. Aydin Güney, Mr. Dipchand Khianra, Mr. Rúḥu'lláh Mumtází, Mr. S. Nagaratnam, Mr. Khudaráḥm Paymán (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Manúchihir Salmánpúr, Mr. Vicente Samaniego, Mrs. Zena Sorabjee, Dr. Chellie Sundram, Mr. Hideya Suzuki, Mr. Yan Kee Leong.

Australasia: Mr. Suhayl 'Alá'í, Mr. Ben Ayala, Mr. Owen Batrick (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mr. Richard Benson, Mrs. Tinai Hancock, Dr. Peter Khan, Mr. Lisiata Maka.

Europe: Mr. Erik Blumenthal, Mrs. Dorothy Ferraby, Dr. Agnes Ghaznavi, Mr. Hartmut Grossmann, Mr. Louis Hénuzet (Trustee of the Continental Fund), Mrs. Ursula Mühlshlegel, Dr. Leo Niederreiter, Mrs. Betty Reed, Mr. Adib Taherzadeh.

A number of friends who have rendered highly valued services as Counselors are not being reappointed for the coming term, and we wish to express here our profound gratitude for the devoted labors they have rendered and are rendering in the path of the Cause.

These dearly-loved believers are:

Mr. Seewoosumbur-Jeehoba Appa, Dr. Iraj Ayman, Mr. Rowland Estall, Mr. Howard Harwood, Miss Violet Hoehnke, Mrs. Salisa Kermani, Mr. Paul Lucas, Miss Elena Marsella, Mr. Alfred Osborne, Miss Thelma Perks, Mr. Hádí Rahmání, Mr. 'Imád Sábírán, Miss Edna True.

Henceforth the Board of Counselors in each continent will have wider discretion to decide such matters as whether to divide its area into zones, and what the boundaries of such zones should be, the number and location of the Board's offices, and the manner in which the members of the Auxiliary Boards will report to and operate under the Counselors. The principles and policies governing the operation of the Continental Boards of Counselors, however, and their relationships with the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies and the individual believers will remain unchanged. As the Bahá'í world experiences the manifold interactions of these two vital and complementary arms of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, the unique benefits of this divinely ordained System become ever more apparent. The harmonious interaction and the proper discharge of the duties of these institutions representing the rulers and the learned among the people of Bahá is the essential basis at this time for the protection of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and the fulfillment of its God-given mandate.

Events of the most profound significance are taking place in the world. The river of human history is flowing at a bewildering speed. Age-old institutions are collapsing. Traditional ways are being forgotten, and newly-born ideologies which were fondly expected to take their place, are withering and decaying before the eyes of their disillusioned adherents. Amidst this decay and disruption, assailed from every side by the turmoil of the age, the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, unshakably founded on the Word of God, protected by the shield of the divine Covenant and assisted by the hosts of the Concourse on High, is rising in every part of the world.

Every institution of this divinely created Order is one more refuge for a distraught populace; every soul illumined by the light of the sacred Message is one more link in the oneness of mankind, one more servant ministering to the needs of an ailing world. Even should the Bahá'í communities, in the years immediately ahead, be cut off from the World Center or from one another—as some already have been—the Bahá'ís will neither halt nor hesitate; they

will continue to pursue their objectives, guided by their Spiritual Assemblies and led by the Counselors, the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants. It is our prayer at the Sacred Threshold that the new and challenging development now taking place in the evolution of the institution of the Counselors will release great energies for the advancement of the Cause of God in every land.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

2 The Relationship of the Continental Boards of Counselors to National Spiritual Assemblies, an Address by Counselor Edna M. True

The Relationship of Continental Boards of Counselors to National Spiritual Assemblies*

An Address by Edna M. True

In his cablegram of June 4, 1957, one of his very last messages to the Bahá'í world, Shoghi Effendi called, with marked emphasis, for the closest collaboration of the Hands of the Cause and National Spiritual Assemblies, referring to them as the "two institutions, occupying, with the Universal House of Justice, next to the Institution of the Guardianship, foremost rank in the divinely ordained administrative hierarchy of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh."¹

Continuing, in this same message, the Guardian asserts that "The security of our precious Faith, the preservation of the spiritual health of the Bahá'í communities, the vitality of the faith of its individual members, the proper functioning of its laboriously erected institutions, the fruition of its worldwide enterprises, the fulfilment of its ultimate destiny, all are directly dependent upon the befitting discharge of the weighty responsibilities now resting upon the members of these two institutions. . . ."²

Both the content and the tone of this vital message emphasize profoundly the great importance of our understanding, as clearly as possible, the subjects we are now considering, namely, the functions and relationships of these two institutions, as a necessary first step towards realizing the nature and scope of the constant and close collaboration called for by the Guardian in this stirring

*Reprinted from *The Bahá'í World: An International Record, Volume XV, 1968-1973*, pp. 621-28, © 1975 by The Universal House of Justice. The footnotes have been changed slightly for this compilation.

1. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950-1957*, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 123.

2. Ibid.

message—a collaboration which is so essential to the health and progress of our beloved Faith.

The most fruitful approach to our task, I feel, is to reflect together on the true nature and theory of operation of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order, of which all the institutions, including the two with which we are presently concerned, are inseparable, component parts. To do this, we must clear our minds of all former concepts of organization which we have heretofore experienced or known, and open our hearts, even more than our intellects, to a wholly new theory, completely unique and different from any hitherto practised, either in former religious dispensations or governments. As the Guardian has told us:

A word should now be said regarding the theory on which this Administrative Order is based and the principle that must govern the operation of its chief institutions. It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, this divinely-conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions.³

The Administrative Order . . . it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems.⁴

It is the Guardian who, in his "World Order" letters⁵ addressed to the early believers—at the very beginning of his ministry—has, with such painstaking care, loving patience and understanding, clarified for us the vital necessity, the unique characteristics, the unimaginable dynamic power, and assured accomplishment of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order. It is through this inexhaustible source of infallible knowledge that we have been enabled to at least glimpse the character and manner of the operation of this

3. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, 2d rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 152.

4. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 326.

5. Shoghi Effendi, letters written between 1929 and 1936 compiled and published under the title *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*.

unique instrument bestowed by God for the fulfillment of His ultimate purpose for mankind.

What, then, are the basic features of this supreme Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh?

That the "bedrock" on which it is founded is "God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day".⁶

That it is divine in origin and authority. "It should be remembered by every follower of the Cause," Shoghi Effendi wrote, "that the system of Bahá'í administration is not an innovation imposed arbitrarily upon the Bahá'ís of the world since the Master's passing, but derives its authority from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is specifically prescribed in unnumbered Tablets, and rests in some of its essential features upon the explicit provisions of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. It thus unifies and correlates the principles separately laid down by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and is indissolubly bound with the essential verities of the Faith."⁷

That it is vitally necessary. ". . . the Spirit breathed by Bahá'u'lláh upon the world . . . can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His Laws."⁸

That it is unique and different from any other organization of the present or the past.

That it operates solely on the spiritual principles and the laws embodied in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

That it provides all the essentials for the establishment of the Faith and for the fulfilment of its ultimate purpose. ". . . the apostles of Bahá'u'lláh in every land . . . have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, the regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task."⁹

In the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh personality and prestige, wealth, intellectual prowess and material power are not needed

6. Ibid., p. 156.

7. Ibid., p. 5.

8. Ibid., p. 19.

9. Ibid., p. 21.

for its progress and success. In the words of Shoghi Effendi: “. . . the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace; . . . its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning can compare; . . . it propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind . . .”¹⁰

In contrast to the organizations of the world, the success and progress of the Bahá'í administrative system is through the spiritual growth and development of those who are responsible for the actual functioning of its institutions. Such development by the individuals is attained by following the spiritual laws and principles upon which it is based.

It is vitally important for us to know and fully understand that the inexhaustible and dynamic spiritual power inherently existing in this New World Order can be released only through the attainment and practice of spiritual qualities. The regenerating spirit of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, flowing freely throughout this system, will continue to strengthen and renew those operating within it, enabling the Cause to progress to its ultimate purpose and mission.

Shoghi Effendi has written: “This Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will. . . demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.”¹¹

The Hand of the Cause Horace Holley, whom the Guardian called an indefatigable and distinguished champion of the Administrative Order, has said: “The administrative aspect of the Bahá'í Cause is in reality no mere set of external regulations but the very fruit of its universal spirit. Bahá'í administration is nothing less than a worldwide ethic, the special characteristic of which is to transform subjective faith into positive cooperative action—unifying the whole being of each believer through his unity with his spiritual brothers. Its unbreakable foundation is the principle

10. Ibid., pp. 51–52.

11. Ibid., p. 144.

of consultation, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared to be the fulfilment of individual conscience in this new age.'¹²

How few are the specific administrative directives given by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and then the beloved Guardian; and, in contrast, how detailed are the guidelines of how we are to serve! In delineating the spiritual qualities we should practise, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to them as "conditions". Shoghi Effendi described them as "obligations incumbent upon the members of consulting councils"¹³—thus implying that the desired results could not otherwise be obtained. Let us briefly review some of these conditions set out by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the Assembly . . . Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught.

"The second condition:—They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion . . . The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority . . . In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness . . ."¹⁴

Let us remember that at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension the organization of the World Order, although fully defined, was not yet established. It became the responsibility and life work of

12. Horace Holley, Introduction, in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932*, 7th rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. vii–ix.

13. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 22.

14. Ibid.

the Guardian to erect the institutions of this Administrative Order according to the laws and principles embedded in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Speaking of the *Will and Testament* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—the Charter of this New World Order—the Guardian's secretary in March, 1930, wrote on his behalf in a letter to an individual: "The contents of the Will of the Master are far too much for the present generation to comprehend. It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed . . ."¹⁵

A review of the activities of the Faith during the fifty years since the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms these statements, for we cannot help but be aware of two clear facts—that the functioning of this mighty Order is in its very beginning stages, and that we stand too close to the beginning of this unique system ordained by Bahá'u'lláh to be able to fully understand its potentialities or the interrelationships of its component parts. Far from discouraging those who are presently serving in the Cause, these statements should spur them on to greater endeavour and deeper faith. For throughout the Writings we are promised that through our increased efforts to function more and more according to the spiritual laws which govern the operation of this divine system, our understanding of its greatness and power will deepen, and our accomplishments will grow in quality and extent.

It is the process of applying these spiritual laws and ideas to every aspect of Bahá'í administration, and of translating them into practical action, that presents the greatest challenge facing the body of believers and particularly those who serve on the institutions of this Cause. I also feel it is this aspect of Bahá'í Administration that is the least understood and most urgently requires our prayerful study and concentrated efforts to comprehend and demonstrate.

As we consider the functions of the institutions of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies let us bear in mind, with particular emphasis, that they are severally component parts of the same living organism, and not separate in-

15. From a letter dated 25 March 1930, quoted in *The Universal House of Justice, Messages from The Universal House of Justice: 1968–1973* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 44.

stitutions each with its own exclusive, clearly defined responsibilities. While certain responsibilities have been assigned to each of these institutions, others are shared in common, even though these may be more in the special province of one or the other.

In the cable dated June 21, 1968,¹⁶ announcing the establishment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, and in the letters which followed, the Universal House of Justice has charged the Counsellors "with specific functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith in the areas under their jurisdiction."¹⁷ In its letter dated June 24, 1968, to all Continental Boards of Counsellors, the Universal House of Justice stated that the Counsellors "will operate in a manner similar to that set forth by the beloved Guardian for the Hands of the Cause in his communications outlining the responsibilities they are called upon to discharge in collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies." The same letter made it clear that "The authority of expulsion and reinstatement will be exercised by the Hands of the Cause of God, subject in each instance to the approval of the Universal House of Justice."¹⁸

In general, therefore, the functions of the Continental Boards of Counsellors include propagation of the Faith; protection of the Faith; appointment and direction of Auxiliary Board members; trusteeship of the Continental Bahá'í Fund; and consultation with the National Spiritual Assemblies. Because the establishment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors insures the extension into the future of the appointed functions of the Institution of the Hands, it is assumed that the following obligations of the Hands of the Cause as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Will and Testament* apply to them: To "diffuse the Divine Fragrances"; to "edify the souls of men"; to "promote learning"; to "improve the character of all men"; and to be "at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words."¹⁹

In delineating the functions of the National Spiritual Assem-

16. See p. 3.

17. See p. 9.

18. See p. 11.

19. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 13.

blies, the Guardian has stated, in effect, that their immediate purpose is to stimulate, unify and co-ordinate the manifold activities of the believers and the Local Spiritual Assemblies. They exercise full authority over the Local Spiritual Assemblies in their province and are to initiate measures and direct in general the affairs of the Cause in the whole country or nation. It is the duty of National Spiritual Assemblies to direct vital matters affecting the interests of the Cause in their country, such as the matter of translations, publication, the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, organizing and administering the teaching work and other similar undertakings that stand distinct from strictly local affairs. It is the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world who elect the Universal House of Justice.

In addition, as revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: "*It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.*"²⁰

Shoghi Effendi emphasized: "Theirs is the duty to purge once for all their deliberations and the general conduct of their affairs from that air of self-contained aloofness, from the suspicion of secrecy, the stifling atmosphere of dictatorial assertiveness, in short, from every word and deed that might savour of partiality, self-centeredness and prejudice. Theirs is the duty, while retaining the sacred and exclusive right of final decision in their hands, to invite discussion, provide information, ventilate grievances, welcome advice from even the most humble and insignificant members of the Bahá'í family, expose their motives, set forth their plans, justify their actions, revise if necessary their verdict, foster the sense of interdependence and co-partnership, of understanding and mutual confidence between them on one hand and all local Assemblies and individual believers on the other."²¹

In considering the relationships of these two important institutions—the Continental Boards of Counsellors and the National

20. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 21.

21. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 143–44.

Spiritual Assemblies—it should be borne in mind that Bahá'í Administration is founded on institutions, laws and principles enshrined in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation; that all of its institutions are divinely ordained—are integral, inseparable components of a living organism, interdependent and inclusive, not independent and exclusive; and that the health, strength and success of each is closely affected by the condition of the whole. As the Universal House of Justice wrote: "The Bahá'í world community, growing like a healthy new body, develops new cells, new organs, new functions and powers as it presses on to its maturity, when every soul, living for the Cause of God, will receive from that Cause, health, assurance, and the overflowing bounties of Bahá'u'lláh which are diffused through His divinely ordained Order."²²

Since the establishment of the Continental Boards of Counsellors in June, 1968, the Universal House of Justice has explained and clarified many important aspects of the relationships of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies in communications some of which have been addressed to the two institutions jointly, and others specifically addressed to one or the other.²³

In a letter dated April 24, 1972, addressed to both the National Assemblies and the Boards of Counsellors, the Universal House of Justice stated: "Other developments in the Institution of the Hands of the Cause and the Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors will no doubt take place in future as the International Teaching Centre comes into being and as the work of the Counsellors expands."

As important and necessary as is the understanding of the functions and specified relationships of the Boards of Counsellors and the National Assemblies, the Writings of our Faith clearly show that of still greater import and significance is the spirit in which their members serve. When the relationship between them is one of mutual understanding, of confidence and trust, of sincere love and co-operation; when in their deliberations and actions they are following the precepts and guidelines which have their source in divine wisdom and which have been so clearly and so fully deline-

22. The Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 38.

23. For the texts of the principal communications, see pp. 3, 6, 16, 36, 40, 42.

ated for them, any matters or questions which arise in regard to their respective functions can be frankly and openly discussed and all issues easily and amicably resolved.

Such a relationship, we must recognize, is unique to this divinely-ordained Administrative Order. The secular world is increasingly characterized by destructive competition between institutions—when there are two legislative bodies, they manoeuvre against each other for power; legislative bodies compete with the judiciary and with the executive branch.

In contrast, the relationship between Bahá'í institutions is one of warm co-operation and collaboration, based upon genuine love and dedication to a common goal. It resembles a marriage, in that there is space for each partner to grow and develop; there is mutual respect and encouragement, and differences are settled by taking counsel together in an atmosphere of loving understanding.

So close are we all to the ways and standards of the world, it is difficult to wholly believe in the efficiency of spiritual means for practical accomplishments. Our human intellect can so easily guide us to other ways which, in its light, seem more desirable and effective. The Universal House of Justice, in a letter dated May 27, 1966, gives us much understanding and wise counsel in this respect: "Service to the Cause of God requires absolute fidelity and integrity and unwavering faith in Him. No good but only evil can come from taking the responsibility for the future of God's Cause into our own hands and trying to force it into ways that we wish it to go regardless of the clear texts and our own limitations. It is His Cause. He has promised that its light will not fail. Our part is to cling tenaciously to the revealed Word and to the institutions that He has created to preserve His Covenant."²⁴

The standard of collaboration between Bahá'í institutions set before us in the messages of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice calls for far more than our human idea of co-operation—even loving co-operation. It is a matter of spiritual growth, and for this we need divine wisdom. How greatly blessed we are to have for our assistance all the guidance needed. Ours is the clear task of striving to understand and obey that guidance.

To all of the other qualities and virtues needed to achieve the

24. The Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 87.

standard we are called upon to exemplify must be added faith—unshakable faith in Bahá'u'lláh's divinely ordained Administrative Order and in its inherent, dynamic spiritual power to fulfil every aspect of His worldwide Mission.

As Shoghi Effendi so wisely counselled the early believers, soon after he became the Guardian of the Faith: "Is not faith but another word for implicit obedience, whole-hearted allegiance, uncompromising adherence to that which we believe is the revealed and express will of God, however perplexing it might first appear, however at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the crude theories, the idle imaginings, the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age? If we are to falter or hesitate, if our love for Him should fail to direct us and keep us within His path, if we desert Divine and emphatic principles, what hope can we any more cherish for healing the ills and sicknesses of this world?"²⁵

(Adapted from an address by Edna M. True delivered at the North Atlantic Oceanic Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland; September 5, 1971.)

25. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 62–63.