



National Spiritual Assembly

From the table of the National Spiritual Assembly

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

The September 7-9 meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly took place in Cardiff and was the National Assembly's second "out and about" meeting of this Bahá'í administrative year. It provided the National Assembly with the opportunity for a productive and wide-ranging consultation with the Bahá'í Council for Wales and with a chance to meet with many of the friends in Wales who gathered at the University of Wales Institute campus on the Saturday evening.

The Council presented the National Assembly with a progress report on the Five Year Plan in Wales. In particular, the National Assembly was delighted to hear that the process of identifying and categorising "areas" within Wales had been completed. In total, 24 such "areas" have been identified, two of which are currently unopened to the Faith. The Council is now in the process of presenting the regional Five Year Plan for Wales to the friends, and Council members are due to travel to each of these areas in the weeks ahead.

The state of the Bahá'í International Fund and the issue of international financial collaboration goals were among the important subjects of consultation around the National Assembly table in Cardiff. The National Assembly took particular note of the fact that the needs of the Bahá'í International Fund have increased substantially and will no doubt continue to do so in the years ahead as the new and exciting opportunities for the growth and development of the Cause of God present themselves, and as the Faith emerges as an increasingly more potent force in human affairs. Therefore, in light of the pressing need for financial resources to meet these present and future challenges, the National Assembly decided to increase its own contribution to the International Fund and to remind the friends once again of their sacred obligations towards the upkeep of this vitally important Fund of the Faith.

As some of the friends may know, the UK Bahá'í community was one of 41 communities in the Bahá'í world assigned certain international financial collaboration goals by the Universal House of Justice at the beginning of the Four Year Plan in 1996. The UK Bahá'ís can be proud of their record of achievement in this area of Bahá'í service: as a result of their sacrificial contributions it was possible for Bahá'í properties, mobile institutes and much-needed equipment to be purchased for, and on behalf of, Bahá'í communities in other parts of the world.

In its July 29 email letter, the House of Justice has informed this National Spiritual Assembly that it is one of 38 National Assemblies chosen to assist national communities in this way again. In response to the request of the Supreme Body, the National Assembly has pledged £30,000 per year for each year of the Five Year Plan. The Treasurer of the National Assembly will shortly be sharing with the friends how the National Assembly envisages these funds to be raised.

The National Assembly also consulted about the possibility of having a dedicated 0800 telephone line to field enquiries about the Faith at the national level but decided that it was not appropriate to pursue this matter at this time since the Bahá'í community does not have the resources to service this adequately. Nevertheless, it may be feasible to operate 0800 or 0845 numbers on a regional and local level in some cases. In any case, the National Assembly warmly encourages the friends to ensure that local Bahá'í communities are listed in the Yellow Pages and other similar telephone directories.

Finally, the National Spiritual Assembly enjoyed another productive working session with Counsellor Shahriar Razavi. The Counsellor will also be joining the National Assembly at its next meeting in Glasgow over the weekend of October 12-14.

National Spiritual Assembly Meetings NEWS email service

The friends may wish to remember the National Spiritual Assembly in their prayers while it is in session. The dates are as follows (all meetings will take place at the Hazíratu'l-Quds unless otherwise stated):

- November 16-18, 2001
- December 14-16, 2001
- January 4-6, 2002 (Leicester: National Spiritual Assembly will also be meeting with Counsellor Razavi, the Auxiliary Board members, the Bahá'í Councils and all its committees, agencies, offices and departments)
- February 15-17, 2002
- March 22-24, 2002 (Manchester: National Spiritual Assembly will be meeting with the Bahá'í Council for England and the friends during the course of the weekend)

The National Assembly has recently been asked if it is acceptable for subscribers to NEWS to forward NEWS postings to others.

The National Assembly wishes all UK Bahá'ís on email to subscribe to NEWS, both for their own benefit and to share the news with their community. It is important to understand that NEWS is the National Assembly's official list and that what is posted here is primarily addressed to the friends in the UK.

Overseas subscribers should always bear in mind that the situation in their country of residence is a matter for their own National Assembly to decide in accordance with conditions in that country. The National Spiritual Assembly of the UK certainly does not advise Bahá'ís elsewhere in the world to act simply on the strength of what appears on NEWS.

National Convention 2002 will be held over the weekend of April 26-28 in Llandudno.

To the friends participating in Unit Conventions throughout the United Kingdom

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY sends you its greetings and love on the occasion of the first Unit Conventions of the Five Year Plan and the Fifth Epoch of the Formative Age of our Faith.

This year's Unit Conventions are especially important for another reason because they are the first stage in the process of the election of the Universal House of Justice at Ridván 2003. The delegates you elect at this series of Unit Conventions will elect the members of the National Spiritual Assembly who will eventually participate in the election of the Supreme Body of our Faith at the Ninth International Bahá'í Convention. In taking part in this glorious process you are indeed raising your voice in God's Kingdom.

As you are no doubt aware, the primary objective of the Five Year Plan is the acceleration of the advancement of the process of entry by troops. It is indeed a weighty goal but it is within our reach. At the heart of the Plan is our commitment to develop the human resources of the Faith through the strengthening of the institute process throughout the United Kingdom. The ultimate success of all our activities depends on the extent to which we build up and utilise this indispensable instrument for the growth of our beloved Faith.

The National Assembly has deliberately kept this message short. The Universal House of Justice has showered us with clear guidance on how we should proceed. The scheme devised by the House of Justice for the growth of the Faith over the next five years was set out in its January 9, 2001 letter to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors. There is no need to repeat it here. The scheme devised in that message has been studied by the National Spiritual Assembly in consultation with the Counsellors and more recently by the Bahá'í Councils. Based on that message national and regional plans have been created which are firmly rooted in the vision of the House of Justice whilst reflecting the circumstances unique to this country and its different constituent parts. The plans of the Bahá'í Councils are in the process of being shared with the friends under their respective jurisdictions.

In light of this guidance we invite you to consider the following questions.

- How do we ensure that a culture of growth is nurtured and sustained?
- What steps can we take to strengthen the institute process in our communities?
- How should we respond to the increasing spiritual hunger prevalent in wider society?
- How can we assist the children and junior youth in our community to discover their true potential and fulfil their inherent capacities?

The National Spiritual Assembly is confident that your earnest and loving consultations will attract the abundant confirmations of the Blessed Beauty.

International collaboration goals

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE has recently written to “38 selected National Assemblies” regarding international collaboration goals. The United Kingdom National Assembly was delighted to be one of this select few!

In every Plan such goals are assigned to mature and well-developed Bahá'í national communities. In the Four Year Plan, 55 national communities benefited from a total of \$1,610,330 contributed by their sister Assemblies.¹

The House of Justice believes that our national community “is in a position to assist other national communities” in the acquisition and improvement of property and equipment and other vital needs of a growing Faith. In this current Five Year Plan, the House of Justice anticipates that approximately \$2,500,000 will be needed for these purposes.

At its last meeting, therefore, the National Assembly decided that our contribution to this goal will be £30,000 in each year of the Five Year Plan. To enable every individual Bahá'í and every community to participate in this worldwide undertaking, the National Assembly has decided that each year it will contribute £15,000 from its own budget and that the other £15,000 is to come from the direct donation of individuals and communities.²

As you plan your personal and community budgets for the coming year, you will want to remember this important goal – a practical and effective way of demonstrating our commitment to the principle of the oneness of humanity and to the prosperity of the world.

1. You might recall that our earlier international collaboration goals included the purchase of a Bahá'í Centre in Malta, the purchase of a mobile institute for Jamaica and fitting out the national office of Ghana.
2. Remember, if you are a taxpayer, the most effective way to make these direct donations is by Gift Aided contributions sent via the National Fund, made payable to “NSA of the Bahá'ís of the UK” and earmarked for the International Collaboration Goals.

Establishment of new Bahá'í Office of Social and Economic Development – BOSED-UK

“Social and economic development efforts are undertaken by Bahá'ís, irrespective of the degree of material prosperity achieved by their nations, as they strive to apply the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the gradual building of a new civilisation.”

(The Universal House of Justice, memorandum to the Office of Social and

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY has recently had the opportunity to review a range of proposals submitted to it by the Trustees of the Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development in the United Kingdom (BASEDUK) regarding the future of BASED and its relationship to the National Assembly.

In light of these proposals and the needs of the Five Year Plan, the National Assembly has decided to establish a Bahá'í Office for Social and Economic Development for the United Kingdom (BOSED-UK), whose primary function will be to educate and inform the Bahá'í community in the United Kingdom about social and economic development and to assist local Bahá'í communities, where conditions are appropriate, to undertake suitable projects of such a nature.

BOSED-UK will now serve as the National Spiritual Assembly's principal agency in the field of social and economic development. In so doing, it will take over this responsibility from BASED-UK which will continue to function as an independent charity involved in fundraising for Bahá'í social and economic development projects in developing countries as requested by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre.

BOSED-UK is empowered to liaise directly with the Bahá'í Councils and the various agencies and committees of the National Spiritual Assembly, as well as with Local Spiritual Assemblies and Groups. The creation of BOSED-UK is an expression of the National Assembly's firm commitment to the process of social and economic development in the United Kingdom, a process that will increasingly play a more important and visible role in the life of the Bahá'í community in the years ahead.

BASED and BOSED Compared

Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development in the United Kingdom (BASED-UK)

- Independent charity
- Founded in 1993

Central Goals:

- Alleviation of poverty
- Advancement of education

Activities aimed at:

- Fund-raising for Bahá'í social and economic development projects in developing countries, as requested by the Bahá'í World Centre.

- At present BASED-UK is supporting two projects in Honduras: Tierra Santa Orphanage; SAT rural education programme

Organisational structure:

Six Trustees appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly: Dr Geeta Kingdon, Mr Ardeshir Laloui, Mr Barney Leith (Secretary), Dr Kishan Manocha, Dr Wendi Momen, Mr Michael Richards; Sub-committees for management of the projects

Financial resources provided by:

British government for SAT project; Annual subscriptions of the Friends of BASED-UK; Donations by other supporters.

Bahá'í Office for Social and Economic Development for the United Kingdom (BOSED-UK)

- Established in 2001 under the National Spiritual Assembly
- Office for SED for the British Bahá'í community

Central Goals:

- Support of SED projects within the UK

Activities aimed at:

- Education about the Bahá'í approach to social and economic development
- Providing training, information and human resources for

SED projects within the UK

Organisational structure:

Three members of the Office: Ms Ineke Gijbers, Mrs Susie Howard, Dr Farzin Rahmani-Shirazi and several consultants appointed by BOSED-UK

Contact person for BASED-UK and BOSED-UK

Mrs Susie Howard, 22 East Saint Helen Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 5EB.
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Financial resources:

Provided by the National Spiritual Assembly

Two important messages from the National Assembly

Unsolicited Messages

The National Spiritual Assembly would like to repeat its warning to the friends to

exercise great caution should they receive unsolicited messages (by letter or email) from people overseas claiming to be Bahá'ís and seeking invitations to attend Bahá'í events.

We know that in many cases they are not Bahá'ís but are seeking to use us to try to get round UK immigration law. **If the friends are unwise in issuing such invitations they could find themselves held responsible by the authorities for any costs the state incurs with such people.** At the very least they will risk causing harm to the good name of the Faith.

There are organised gangs operating in several countries that seek out groups they think might be naive or helpful and of whom they might take advantage. Bahá'ís are only one such target.

The friends are strongly advised not to issue invitations, whether in general or to specific events, to people contacting them from overseas whom they do not know. If they are minded to do so they should contact the National Spiritual Assembly, which will check with the Bahá'í authorities of the country involved.

Email Petitions

As you are probably aware, there are a number of email petitions currently in circulation.

The National Spiritual Assembly appreciates the concern which the friends feel about the subjects of these petitions. Nonetheless, the friends should exercise the utmost caution and wisdom with respect to participating in such email petitions since we often do not know who originated them and how they are going to be used.

A particular concern is that a petition signed by numbers of friends who could be identified as Bahá'ís, being passed on to a Muslim organisation, could have serious repercussions for our fellow believers in certain parts of the world.

Therefore the National Assembly's view is that it is better for the friends not to take part in such email petitions. Frustrating as this may seem, the friends should always remain confident that their humble efforts to teach and serve the Cause of God will bring about the establishment of the Most Great Justice and the ultimate redemption of mankind.

With loving Bahá'í Greetings,
National Spiritual Assembly

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