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Continental Board of Counsellors

## The Continental Board of Counsellors for the Protection and Propagation of the Bahá'í Faith in Europe

### Auxiliary Board Members Conference, Frankfurt, 1–4 February, 2002

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AT THE START of the new term of service for the Auxiliary Board members, a series of 16 regional conferences throughout the world has been called by the International Teaching Centre. 57 Auxiliary Board members from northern Europe (including the 12 Auxiliary Board members who serve in the UK community) attended the conference in Frankfurt, Germany from 1st–4th February. Two members of the International Teaching Centre and nine Continental Counsellors joined the Auxiliary Board

*Members of the Auxiliary Board, Farshid Taleb; Viv Craig; Coorous Mohtadi; Member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Europe, Mr Shahriar Razavi; Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi; Parvin Morrissey; Rita Docherty; Farnaz Heidari; Isatou Hyde-Forster; Azar Melville; Denis Coyle; Dr Firaydour Javaheri Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre; Steven Cleasby. Not in picture, Ann O'Sullivan.*

members at the conference which was entitled “Promoting a Culture of Growth”. Its aim was to give the Board members insights into the processes of the Five Year Plan which they would in turn pass on to their communities back home.

There were many aspects of the conference which participants will cherish for a long time: a visit to the European Bahá'í Temple; the fellowship of the other Board Members; finding out that we face the same challenges all over Europe and the outstanding hospitality of our hosts, the Continental Board of Counsellors. Here is a summary of some of the themes addressed by the conference:

The major and minor plans of God. Many people are anxious about the state of the world at the moment. The major plan of God is tearing down old structures and ways of life. This can be very distressing, but it has to happen in order to break down the barriers to world peace. It is helping humankind to see how useless excessive materialism is and to take a global view. The minor plan of God is the healing process, which is building up systems that will serve as a pattern for a new world order.

**A new mode of growth:** Up to now, the Faith has spread in the UK like a drop of oil does when placed onto some water. We have formed a large but thin surface layer (e.g. there are small UK Bahá'í communities stretching from the Scilly Isles up to Shetland). Like oil and

water, however, the Bahá'ís and wider British society have tended to remain separate from each other. It's now time for the oil and water to mix. We are being asked by the Universal House of Justice to grow by penetration – to share the Faith with people living in our immediate localities. What ingredients should we add to help the oil and water to mix? Study circles, devotionals and children's classes, all open to the wider community! We need to pay particular attention to the study circle process: once a community has members going through the basic sequence of courses this process will generate the basic activities called for in the Plan and human resources a community needs.

Individual initiative: We have a tendency to sit back and expect the Institutions of the Faith to do all the work and make the plans. We need to change this mindset – individuals have always done the work of the Faith. It's not the job of the Assemblies to form “top-down” plans and hope that the community will support them. Rather, the Assembly should find out what individuals in the community would like to do and then guide, support and resource these personal pledges within the basic Five Year Plan framework laid down by the Universal House of Justice.

We live in exciting and challenging times! The direction from the Universal House of Justice is very clear. Our job is to rise to the challenge and play our part in this next stage in the development of God's plan for humankind.

Parvin Morrissey

