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11th November, 2002

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

BELOVED FRIENDS,

Conscious of the increasing burden of advancing years and the effect of this on the services they can render, Mr. Hushmand Fatheazam and Mr. 'Ali Nakhjavani have, after prayerful consideration of the best interests of the Cause of God, requested permission to relinquish their membership on the Universal House of Justice in accordance with Article V.2.(c) of its Constitution.

The House of Justice has regretfully accepted the resignation of these beloved members, who have rendered highly valued services in the Holy Land, since 1961 in Mr. Nakhjavani's case, and since 1963 in that of Mr. Fatheazam. They will thus be able to continue their services to the Cause of God free from the inexorable pressure of work at the World Centre. In view, however, of the imminence of the next international election, we have requested them to remain in office until that time, and to this they have readily agreed.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

Bahá'ís participate in interfaith celebration on the environment

(BAHÁ'Í WORLD NEWS SERVICE)

At a special high-level interfaith gathering held in honour of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, Bahá'í representatives joined with the leaders of nine other major world religions to celebrate the significant role that religions can play in caring for the environment. Held on November 13, 2002 in London's historic Banqueting House in Whitehall and titled "Our Place in Creation", the event featured the presentation of a series of environmental projects to Her Majesty the Queen and her husband HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as a programme of sacred artistic, musical, and dance performances by representatives of each religion.

Organised by the Alliance on Religion and Conservation (ARC), the event sought to explore religions' understanding of the place of humanity in creation. The Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism were all represented.

The Duke of Edinburgh, who has played a key role in bringing religions into the environmental movement at the international level, explained the purpose of the gathering in a short talk.

"We desperately need the conviction of religious belief to guide us in the way we live on, and use, the planet," said Prince Philip. "We have got to learn to balance the economic and scientific realities against the religious demands for responsibility and consideration for the

created world. It is not going to be easy, but I am sure that belief and conviction are very powerful motives to care for our planet with all its diversity.”

Among the religious leaders in attendance were: His All-Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, representing Orthodox Christianity; the Rt Rev Michael Turnbull, Lord Bishop of Durham, representing Protestant Christianity; Sri Kushok Bakula, representing Buddhism; Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Israel, representing Judaism, and Ervad Dr Ramiyar Parvez Karanjia, a leading writer on Zoroastrian affairs.

Mrs Guilda Navidi Walker represented the Bahá’í International Community. The Bahá’í Community of the United Kingdom was represented by its secretary, Mr Barney Leith.

“The event was quite significant, not only because of the presence of the Queen and Prince Philip, but because of the very senior leadership represented among the faith communities,” said Mr Leith. “And, despite all of the religious hatred and intolerance that sometimes unfortunately seems so prevalent in our world, the event also served to demonstrate that religious communities can work together on important global issues, such as the environment.”

For its project, the Bahá’í International Community presented the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women. Based in Indore, India, the Institute gives indigenous women training in literacy, agriculture, health, income-generation, and environmental conservation.

As the Bahá’í contribution to the programme of sacred performances, Shiva Ashrafi Cooper chanted one of the Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh. Now a resident of the United Kingdom, Mrs Ashrafi Cooper was born in Iran.

In addition to the chanting by Mrs Ashrafi Cooper, the event featured performances by members of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mongolian National Song and Dance Ensemble, the London Adventist Chorale, and others. The Bahá’í International Community has been a member of the Alliance on Religion and Conservation since it was founded in 1995 at a summit meeting at Windsor Castle hosted by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

