

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

3 December 2020

Transmitted by email:

U.S.A.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice has received your email letter of 3 November 2019 sharing your concern about the affairs of the world and suggesting that the worldwide Bahá'í community undertake projects to address the material sustainability of communities. We have been asked to convey the following and regret the long delay in our reply.

In response to questions regarding the advent of catastrophic events, the House of Justice has previously expressed that Bahá'ís should not concern themselves unduly about the possibility of impending tragedies. The entire world is going through a period of adversity in which calamities have been and are occurring. Bahá'ís should avoid becoming preoccupied with speculation about potential catastrophes and should concentrate their energy and attention on the work of the Faith. Their optimistic outlook, their unshakeable conviction that humankind is evolving to a new stage in its history characterized by world unity and peace, and their wholehearted commitment to the welfare of humanity will undoubtedly attract to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh thoughtful people who yearn for a way out of the difficulties that surround them. Enclosed for your study is a selection of extracts from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and the House of Justice in response to related questions.

As to the specific issues raised in your letter, indeed, one of the most pressing problems of humanity in the current century is how a growing, rapidly developing, and not yet united global population can, in a just manner, live in harmony with the planet and its finite resources. The role of the Bahá'í community in addressing this and the myriad other formidable challenges facing humanity can best be understood in the context of the unfoldment of the Divine Plan. The House of Justice has in recent years attempted to bring to the attention of those who long to eradicate the blight of present-day social ills the potentialities for transformation inherent in the systematic implementation of the instruments and methods of the current series of Plans. The friends are called to three simultaneous, overlapping, and coherent areas of action: community-building efforts in clusters; projects and activities for social action; and involvement in the discourses of society, whether in neighborhoods or in personal or professional associations. As the House of Justice highlighted in its *Riḍván* 2015 message to the Bahá'ís of the world, “ultimately, it is systematic, determined, and selfless action undertaken within the wide embrace of the Plan’s framework that is the most constructive response of every concerned believer to the multiplying ills of a disordered society.” In such a context, the friends can gradually address the problems that face them and their surrounding communities.

In particular, social action is one means by which capacity can be built within a community to address the social and material needs of humanity, such as those related to agriculture, health, and education. In many instances across the globe, groups of like-minded individuals, having cultivated the habit of studying relevant materials together, including pertinent selections from the Bahá'í writings, come to carry out simple projects aimed at improving an aspect of their collective life. These endeavors can take place with varying degrees of complexity, from the grassroots of a community to the national and international levels, with progress in the area of social action supported by the recently established Bahá'í International Development Organization. The publication *For the Betterment of the World*, which can be found at the address below, describes, among other things, examples of such initiatives.

Bahá'ís must be careful not to be swept up in a spiral of fear and darkness engendered by prevailing conditions but, rather, devote their energies to building up a new world and promoting an environment of serenity and courage. An avenue for thoughtful believers who, as well-wishers of humanity, desire to offer a different perspective on the changes affecting their societies is through participation in relevant discourses in the various social spaces in which they are involved. Of course, in so doing, it is important that the friends steer away from becoming entangled in the political dimensions of any particular issue and instead strive to uplift people's vision by calling attention to the root causes of the issues at hand and the principles of the Faith that address them. In sharing insights from the Bahá'í teachings, the friends can indeed become a beacon of hope so that those who are experiencing the inevitable breakdown of the lamentably defective old world order can at the same time gain understanding and draw inspiration from the teachings for the building of a new world order.

Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice at the Sacred Threshold that your efforts to serve humanity may be blessed and confirmed.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

dl.bahai.org/bahai.org/osed/betterment-world-standard-quality.pdf

Enclosure