THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

8 November 2019

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

The measure of what you have achieved—not only in the last few weeks, but during a two-year period of remarkable advance now brought to a stunning climax—compels us to address you who are the visible hosts of a movement that has proved itself irrepressible. Far from being merely a memorable event, the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb was the fruit of eight cycles of devoted effort, carried out in unity and with a sense of undaunted initiative. We rejoiced to see the friends so assured in their response to the call to service. Local communities, neighbourhoods, and villages became arenas for intensified activity of all kinds, as the knowledge of what the community could accomplish—witnessed at the last bicentenary—prompted a release of tremendous energy and enterprise, supported by a sound process of preparation and reflection. There are so many highlights to acknowledge. Celebrations within families and among families featured prominently; gatherings organized by youth for their peers were likewise a strength. Opportunities for animated retellings of the lives of the Báb and His early disciples were eagerly seized. Festivities were given added depth through conversations on the needs of society, often begun by the parents of young children. The bicentenary elicited artistic works of beauty and feeling, creative expressions of devotion too numerous and diverse to describe. And the way that each avenue of activity became a natural invitation to engage with the institute was especially noticeable. We were much encouraged by the capacity shown to bring the broadest possible spectrum of people into the embrace of the community's activities. Surely, this illustrates how moments sacred in human history and commemorated at Holy Days have immense power to uplift individual souls and to weld a people together through shared experience. What great promise for advances at the level of culture lies in the universal celebration of such Festivals in place after place in the years to come!

The reality that there is abundant receptivity in the world at large is not in doubt. Progress depends on developing the capacity to extend the community-building process further still. And so all eyes turn to the months ahead. The devotion to the Twin Divine Luminaries and to the well-being of humanity which inspired your noble exertions thus far must sustain you in the coming six cycles. We urge everyone who worked to bring about this success to hasten now and gather again to reflect and to consult, and to determine how best to apply, in each unique setting, all that your experience has taught you: how an expanding nucleus of friends can cultivate a growing pattern of activity; how children can advance to the next grade and junior youth to the succeeding text, further developing their moral and spiritual qualities; how institute courses can yield much-needed skills and capacities; how the path of service can widen to accommodate large numbers; how real hope for the betterment of society can be demonstrated in action; and how all of God's peoples can be enabled to take inspiration from His new Revelation, and souls who are receptive can be invited to identify with the Cause of the

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Abhá Beauty. In this continuing period of special potency, at an hour when the world seems powerless in the face of overwhelming peril and souls have succumbed to dismay and despair, Bahá'u'lláh has shown us another glimpse of what the community that bears His name can accomplish through courage—even heroism—in the discharge of its God-given mission. We will pray earnestly in the Holy Shrines for His unfailing confirmations to surround every child and every youth, every woman and every man, every family and every community that treasures His love in their hearts.

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