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National Spiritual Assembly

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From the table of the National Spiritual Assembly

4th March, 2002

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

The National Spiritual Assembly met again over the weekend of February 15-17.

Over the years, the National Assembly has repeatedly emphasised to the community the importance of giving greater attention to the advancement of women in its collective life and functioning. The establishment of the Office for the Advancement of Women and the creation of Associations for Bahá'í Women in the different parts of the United Kingdom have provided a powerful reinforcement to the efforts of the believers in this vital aspect of Bahá'í endeavour. A special consultation with Counsellor Shahriar Razavi and Mrs Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaei, Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women, gave the National Assembly a most welcome opportunity to review developments in this area. One of the learning points that has emerged is that the foundational principle of the equality of the sexes needs to be owned by both men and women if any meaningful progress is to be made. To this end, the National Spiritual Assembly encourages the friends to study the Compilation on Women, which was issued in 1986 by the Universal House of Justice. Indeed, the National Assembly has decided to take a lead on this itself and will be studying this important document during one of its forthcoming meetings.

Another area of focus at the February meeting of the National Assembly was that of the spiritual education of children. Prompted by some recent queries and in light of the guidance contained in the January 9, 2001 letter of the Universal House of Justice, the National Spiritual Assembly took the opportunity to reflect on the challenge of providing Bahá'í education to children in the United Kingdom in a way that can be readily accessed but without undermining, in any way, the continued excellent functioning of the network of Bahá'í Community Schools in operation in this country.

The National Assembly dearly wishes to see as many communities as possible be given the opportunity to access Bahá'í education for the children in their midst. However, one of the very real challenges facing many communities where there are children, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, who are keen to draw benefit from a system of Bahá'í education, is the issue of their geographical remoteness from the nearest Community School. Therefore, the National Assembly has asked the Children's Bahá'í Education Service (CBES), the body appointed to provide the National Assembly with expert advice in the area of Bahá'í education, to develop a strategy for educational provision that will bridge the gap between local children's classes and Community Schools.

Once the National Spiritual Assembly has had the opportunity to review the draft strategy proposed by the CBES, it will be issuing guidance to the community on how the process of Bahá'í education of children is to move forward in the UK in light of the seminal January 9, 2001 letter of the Universal House of Justice.

The National Spiritual Assembly also consulted about the implications of the January 10, 2002 letter of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world in which the

Supreme Body raised a moving call for overseas pioneers during the Five Year Plan. The National Assembly has since been informed by the House of Justice that the UK is to provide 150 international pioneers and 500 overseas travelteachers during the course of this Plan. The National Assembly fully expects the community to achieve this important goal. Indeed, the field of overseas service has been one in which this Bahá'í community has already greatly distinguished itself. Africa, the Pacific, and Eastern Europe are among some of the regions of the world where British believers have made historic contributions to the growth and development of the Cause of God as pioneers and travel-teachers.

Finally, the members of the National Spiritual Assembly joined over 300 friends at the national memorial service for Philip Hainsworth at Baden-Powell House on Saturday, February 16. Through a special audio-visual presentation and inspiring eulogies we were reminded of Philip's life of uninterrupted and valiant service to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. May his example spur us on to win ever greater victories for the Cause of God during the Five Year Plan.

With loving Bahá'í greetings

National Spiritual Assembly

Naw-Rá'z Reception

March 26, 2002

DEAR FRIENDS,

The National Spiritual Assembly is very happy to be able to report on the success of the Naw-Rá'z reception hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'ís on the evening of March 21. The reception took place on the terrace of the House of Commons, the most prestigious venue for such events in the House of Commons.

Around 100 guests attended, including parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of the media and of a range of non-governmental and interfaith organizations, individual external affairs contacts, and Bahá'ís.

Lembit Opik MP, Chair of the All Party Friends of the Bahá'ís, welcomed everyone to the reception and spoke very warmly about the qualities and achievements of the Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í community. He said how close he felt himself to be to the Bahá'ís, who always look for and bring out the best in others. He spoke of the need for individual and collective heroism and told the Bahá'ís they should be proud of what they are doing. His personal goal, he said, was to try to bring soul back into politics and he felt empowered by his friendship with Bahá'ís to do this.

John Battle MP, the Prime Minister's adviser on interfaith matters, said that he associated himself with all Mr Opik's remarks. He then read out the Prime Minister's Naw-Rá'z message of greeting to the Bahá'í community.

The Secretary of the National Assembly then welcomed everyone on behalf of the Bahá'í community and said a few words about the work of the Institute for Social Cohesion, the initiative of the Bahá'í community to facilitate dialogue between government, thinkers and practitioners who are working for social cohesion.

The guest speaker for the evening was Omid Djalili. Ten minutes of Omid's stand-up routine had everybody laughing uproariously. John Battle later told Bahá'ís that he had enjoyed the humour immensely.

The reception was also an opportunity for networking and for the opening up of further opportunities to "influence processes towards world peace", one of the main objectives given by the Universal House of Justice for external affairs. There can be no doubt that those who came to the reception will remember this well organised, highly enjoyable, nonalcoholic reception with the stand-up comedian, celebrating Bahá'í New Year in the House of Commons.

PS We have just learned that parts of the Prime Minister's Naw-RÃz greeting were quoted in an article about Naw-RÃz published in the March 22, 2002 edition of Penguin News, the local paper of the Falkland Islands.

Child Protection Policy Document

March 14, 2002

Dearly loved Friends,
The National Spiritual Assembly is pleased to announce that its new Child Protection Policy Document and the revised and updated Child Protection Procedures are now available in hard copy form from the National Office and as a PDF file from resources@bahai.org.uk

With loving BahÃjÃ'Ã greetings
National Spiritual Assembly

Assistants Wanted

February 1, 2002

Dearly loved Friends,
The National Spiritual Assembly is always looking for willing assistants for a variety of activities and to serve in many capacities at the national level.

We are looking particularly to the Persian-speaking friends but we would welcome enquiries from all sections of the community. If you would like to serve in some way, please do let us know and send us details of your expertise and interest. We particularly need people to teach Asians, travel teach and serve on various committees and agencies.

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