

## Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Bahá'í Faith

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### I. The Bahá'í Teachings on Conservation and Sustainable Development

In this age of transition toward a world society, protection of the environment and conservation of the earth's resources represent an enormously complex challenge. The rapid progress in science and technology that has united the world physically has also greatly accelerated destruction of the biological diversity and rich natural heritage with which the planet has been endowed. Material civilization, driven by the dogmas of consumerism and aggressive individualism and disoriented by the weakening of moral standards and spiritual values, has been carried to excess

Only a comprehensive vision of a global society, supported by universal values and principles, can inspire individuals to take responsibility for the long-term care and protection of the natural environment. Bahá'ís find such a world-embracing vision and system of values in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh - teachings which herald an era of planetary justice, prosperity and unity

Bahá'u'lláh enjoins His followers to develop a sense of world citizenship and a commitment to stewardship of the earth. His writings are imbued with a deep respect for the natural world and for the interconnectedness of all things. They emphasize that the fruits of God's love and obedience to His commandments are dignity, nobility and a sense of worth. From these attributes emerge the natural inclination to treat one another with love and compassion, and the willingness to sacrifice for the betterment of society. Bahá'u'lláh also teaches moderation, a commitment to justice, and detachment from the things of this world - spiritual disciplines which enable individuals to contribute to the establishment of a prosperous and united world civilization. The broad pattern for such a civilization and the principles on which it should be based are set forth in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, a revelation which offers hope to a dispirited humanity and the promise that it is truly possible both to meet the needs of present and future generations and to build a sound foundation for social and economic development. The inspiration and the vision for this civilization are captured in Bahá'u'lláh's words: *"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."*<sup>1</sup>

Among the principles guiding the Bahá'í approach to conservation and sustainable development, the following are of particular importance

- nature reflects the qualities and attributes of God and should, therefore, be greatly respected and cherished;
- all things are interconnected and flourish according to the law of reciprocity; and
- the oneness of humanity is the fundamental spiritual and social truth shaping our age.

Bahá'í Scriptures describe nature as an emanation of God's will

*Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.*<sup>2</sup>

Understanding nature as a reflection of the majesty and an expression of the purpose of God inspires a deep respect for the natural world

*(W)hatever I behold I readily discover that it maketh Thee known unto me, and it remindeth me of Thy signs, and of Thy tokens, and of Thy testimonies. By Thy glory! Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine Omnipotence.*<sup>3</sup>

This attitude of respect is further reinforced by copious metaphorical references to the natural world woven throughout the Bahá'í Scriptures. However, while nature is greatly valued and respected, it is not to be worshipped or adored. Rather it is to serve the purpose given by God to the human race: to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. In this regard, the Bahá'í Faith promotes a world view that is neither bio-centric nor, strictly speaking, anthropocentric, but rather theocentric, with the Revelations of God at its center. Humankind, as it strives to carry out the Divine Will in this, the physical realm, is thus the trustee or steward of nature

Responsible stewardship of the natural world logically extends to the humane treatment of animals

*(I)t is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature.<sup>4</sup>*

*Train your children from the earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals.<sup>5</sup>*

All things are interconnected and flourish according to the law of reciprocity

The principles of interconnectedness and reciprocity underlie the Bahá'í understanding of both the operations of the universe and the responsibilities of humankind

*For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever...<sup>6</sup>*

*(C)o-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.<sup>7</sup>*

*Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.<sup>8</sup>*

Evolutionary processes are explicitly affirmed in Bahá'í Scriptures

*All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine system is one. ... When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. No, they gradually grow and develop, and then attain the degree of perfection.<sup>9</sup>*

The blessings of bio-diversity are also highlighted:

*(D)iversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most glorious Lord.... This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole.... How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof...<sup>10</sup>*

The spiritual and material planes are interconnected and act upon each other

*We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.<sup>11</sup>*

Given the fundamental unity of science and religion - the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual realms - it is not surprising that scientific pursuits are highly praised:

*(T)he faculty of intellectual investigation into the secrets of creation... is the most praiseworthy power of man, for through its employment and exercise the betterment of the human race is accomplished, the development of the virtues of mankind is made possible...<sup>12</sup>*

However, the exercise of the faculty of investigation must be guided by spiritual principles, especially moderation and humility.

*(A)ny agency whatever, though it be the instrument of mankind's greatest good, is capable of misuse.<sup>13</sup>*

*If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation.<sup>14</sup>*

*Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory....<sup>15</sup>*

In light of the interdependence and reciprocity of all parts of nature, the evolutionary perfection of all beings, and the importance of diversity "to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole,"<sup>16</sup> it is clear to Bahá'ís that, in the ordering of human affairs, every effort should be made to preserve as much as possible the earth's bio-diversity and natural order.

Nevertheless, in the process of extending social and economic justice to the entire human family, certain difficult and possibly irreversible

decisions, may have to be taken. Such decisions, Bahá'ís believe, made with a consultative framework, involving those affected and taking into account the impact of any resulting policies, programs and activities on the quality of life of subsequent generations

For Bahá'ís, Bahá'u'lláh's promise that civilization will exist on this planet for a minimum of five thousand centuries makes it unconscionable to ignore the long-term impact of decisions made today. The world community must, therefore, learn to make use of the earth's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability into the distant reaches of time. This does not, however, mean that Bahá'ís advocate a "hands-off, back to the woods" policy. On the contrary, the world civilization that Bahá'ís believe will eventually emerge will be animated by a deep religious faith and will be one in which science and technology will serve humanity and help it to live in harmony with nature.

The oneness of humanity is the fundamental spiritual and social truth shaping our age.

The oneness of humanity is, for Bahá'ís, the operating principle and ultimate goal of humankind's collective life on the planet. It is applicable not only to the individual, but also to the relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family:

The oneness of mankind... implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.... It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world - a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.<sup>17</sup>

It represents the consummation of human evolution... and... carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment to this final stage in this stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching, and that nothing short of a power that is born of God can succeed in establishing it.<sup>18</sup>

Bahá'í Scriptures maintain that adherence to the principle of the oneness of humanity will have a direct and enduring impact on man's spiritual, social and physical environments. Universal acceptance of this principle will entail a major restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal and political systems. This restructuring will facilitate the emergence of a sustainable, just and prosperous world civilization. Ultimately only a spiritually based civilization - in which science and religion work in harmony - will be able to preserve the ecological balance of the earth, foster stability in human population, and advance both the material and the spiritual well-being of all peoples and nations

### **In Conclusion**

Bahá'í Scriptures teach that, as trustees of the planet's vast resources and biological diversity, humanity must seek to protect the "heritage [of] future generations;"<sup>19</sup> see in nature a reflection of the divine; approach the earth, the source of material bounties, with humility; temper its actions with moderation; and be guided by the fundamental spiritual truth of our age, the oneness of humanity. The speed and facility with which we establish a sustainable pattern of life will depend, in the final analysis, on the extent to which we are willing to be transformed, through the love of God and obedience to His Laws, into constructive forces in the process of creating an ever-advancing civilization

## **II. An Overview of the Bahá'í World Community's Environmental Program Since Joining the Network on Conservation and Religion in 1987**

Individual Bahá'ís and Bahá'í communities have, for decades, been involved in the protection and preservation of the environment. During the last ten years, however, there has been a notable growth in these initiatives

On the global level, the Bahá'í International Community officially joined the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Network On Conservation And Religion in 1987.

In 1989 a compilation of extracts from the Bahá'í Writings was released to the Bahá'í world. This compilation, Conservation of the Earth's Resources, has been widely studied in Bahá'í communities across the planet and has provided increased insight and inspiration for Bahá'ís undertaking conservation initiatives

That same year an Office of the Environment was created within the Bahá'í International Community. The Office of the Environment represents the Bahá'í International Community at the United Nations and in other international fora addressing issues of sustainable development. It brings environmental concerns to the attention of Bahá'í communities and catalyzes activity by providing communities with information and by helping them to network with individuals, institutions and resources.

Scores of national Bahá'í communities - including Brazil, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Taiwan - and many local communities have set up Environment Offices or the equivalent. These offices promote sustainable development activities and education, often in cooperation with other organizations and individuals with similar principles and goals. Many other communities have incorporated environmental protection into the purview of their already established Offices of Social and Economic Development

The following examples of environmental initiatives and development activities involving Bahá'í communities and individuals are grouped together loosely under five categories: education and training; projects; the arts; advocacy; and Bahá'í Holy Places and gardens.

### **Education and Training**

Numerous education and public awareness programs to encourage conservation and sustainable development have been launched by Bahá'í communities and individuals world-wide

- Bahá'í communities around the world are engaged in a continual effort to better understand and apply the Bahá'í Teachings to the environmental challenges before humanity. They are examining the Bahá'í Scriptures concerning conservation and development and exploring ways to translate the teachings into action. Individual and collective study, reflection, and consultation often lead to plans and projects.
- Articles on environment and development have been written by a number of Bahá'í scholars, and several Bahá'í publications now regularly contain conservation-related information and ideas.
- Bahá'í schools, summer schools, youth conferences and other meetings have devoted sessions and sometimes entire programs to issues of environment and development. Working groups on issues of sustainable development have been formed under the aegis of

various national and regional Associations For Bahá'í Studies.

- The Bahá'í Office of the Environment for Japan has started environmental education programs in community groups in Honshu and Kyushu.
- The Bahá'í community of Brazil, in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), launched a conservation education program, which trained school teachers in and around the capital, Brasília, and produced curriculum materials and a video. The second phase of this project is currently underway, replicating these activities in several Brazilian states.
- Various local and national Bahá'í communities from Saskatoon, Fort Murray and Leicester, to Zimbabwe, Guyana and India - have developed locally relevant conservation curriculum modules and teaching materials.
- The Bahá'í Office of the Environment for Taiwan, in collaboration with the national government, has trained hundreds of teachers throughout the country to introduce conservation issues into curricula. The Office has also produced a series of national radio educational programs on environmental care and protection.
- Núr University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, whose philosophies of education and administration are derived from Bahá'í principles, has initiated a Masters Degree program in Development.
- Bahá'í community radio stations in six countries carry programs and public service announcements on various issues of environment and development, including sustainable agricultural practices and care for the earth.
- Environmental camps are held by Bahá'í youth in Colombia to study conservation principles as found in Bahá'í Scriptures and to translate these principles into action.
- Ecología Y Unidad Mundial (Ecology and World Unity), a bimonthly newspaper put out by the Bahá'í community of Argentina, covers issues of environment and development. It is sold throughout Argentina and distributed world-wide.
- Vanguardia Trust, a Bahá'í-inspired organization which began in Puerto Rico, produces a quarterly newsletter of ideas and projects focusing on education, appropriate technology and development.
- One Country, the quarterly newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community, which is sent to over 30,000 individuals and organizations (in Chinese, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish), regularly covers issues of environment and development.

## Projects

Conservation projects have ranged from individual initiatives such as Rainbow Reforestation, an effort by two Bahá'ís, Mrs. Anne Marie and Mr. Michael Karlberg, to apply spiritual principles of unity and consultation to large-scale reforestation work in Canada; to community-initiated clean-up campaigns by Bahá'í youth in Scotland and tree-planting in Iceland, Pakistan, Uganda, Brazil, Haiti and Australia

- The Tora-san Project is an ongoing experiment in organic farming by the Bahá'í community of Japan. Located near the city of Kurume, Kyushu, children, youth and adults are learning to grow food without pesticides and artificial fertilizers.
- The Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore, India, has programs dedicated to improving the spiritual, physical and social environments. At the Earth Summit, the Institute received the Global 500 Award from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The Clean and Beautiful Swaziland campaign has been lauded by the national government for its work in cleaning the Swazi countryside. The campaign's founder, Dr. Irma Allen, a Swazi Bahá'í, also received UNEP's prestigious Global 500 Award.
- Mrs. Fatima Traazil, a Bahá'í from Singapore, won the national "Green Leaf Award" from the Ministry for the Environment for her ongoing campaign to promote sound environmental principles by encouraging recycling and discouraging waste.
- New Dawn Engineering, a Bahá'í-run initiative in Swaziland, produces environmentally friendly appropriate technologies.
- Over 40 national Bahá'í communities around the world initiated activities on the 20th Anniversary of Earth Day in 1990. Bahá'í communities continue to be active each year both on Earth Day and on World Environment Day.
- The SR-2 solar radio, produced for the Vanguardia Trust by Dr. Dean K Stevens, a Bahá'í, has contributed new technology to the field of solar-voltaic radio. Ten thousand SR-2s have been produced and the model is being field-tested by a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations. An advanced model, SR-4, is currently being developed.
- Fish farming projects have been initiated by Bahá'í communities in Bolivia and Malaysia.
- The Bahá'í community in Cochabamba, Bolivia, has developed solar, altiplano greenhouses, and has extended this low-cost technology to several villages.
- Many local Bahá'í communities throughout Malaysia are involved in recycling.
- Short- and long-term tree-planting campaigns have been initiated by Bahá'í communities in many places across the planet: these include the Breath of Life tree-planting project of the Bahá'í community of Hawaii which planted indigenous trees on all the Hawaiian Islands; the reforestation efforts of the students of the Rabbani Bahá'í High School in Madhya Pradesh where tens of thousands of trees have been planted around the campus and in neighboring villages; the efforts of Bahá'ís in Washington, United States, to replant denuded stream banks; the villages reforestation project of the Anís Zunúzí Bahá'í School in Port au Prince, Haiti; and the campaign of the Bahá'ís of Iceland to plant thousands of trees on Skógar, the ancestral property of the famous Icelandic poet, Mr. Jochum M. Eggertsson.
- The Bahá'í community of Mauritius was instrumental in launching a national, interfaith conservation network.
- Bahá'í communities in Kenya are involved in the manufacture and distribution of charcoal-burning, fuel-efficient, "jiko" stoves.
- The Bahá'í community of the Philippines, working in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, has been involved in environmental education and conservation work in the Camp John Hay National Park.
- Many communities are involved in cleanup efforts and the beautification of parks, highways and riverbeds. Several of these efforts are ongoing, including "adopt a highway" campaigns.

## The Arts

The importance of the arts in inspiring changes in attitudes and behavior is stressed in the Bahá'í Writings. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that many Bahá'í communities have used the arts to promote conservation awareness and commitment. These cover a wide range as is illustrated by the following examples

- The Bahá'í International Community organized the Arts for Nature event at the Syon House in London, both to encourage artistic expression in the service of conservation and to raise funds for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
- The Singapore Bahá'í Women's Committee organized a similar national Arts For Nature event. Many artistic works were created by Singaporean artists for this event, and funds were raised for conservation projects in the region.

- The Bahá'í Philippines has organized music festivals to raise awareness of national environmental issues.
- The Bahá'í International Community and its national Brazilian affiliate, in collaboration with UNICEF, produced a book of children's artwork, *Tomorrow Belongs to the Children*. Thousands of school children from 26 nations around the world discussed issues of sustainable development and produced artwork and poetry from these discussions. Contests were then held to choose works to appear in this book. *Tomorrow Belongs to the Children*, with its poignant messages, has been distributed to thousands of individuals, including Heads of State and UN Ambassadors.
- In 1994, the Bahá'í Office of the Environment for Taiwan held an international children's art contest and exhibition on the theme, "Our Fragile Environment." This exhibition was seen by tens of thousands of people. A second contest and exhibition, "Animals and Me," is scheduled for late 1995.
- The Peace Monument in Rio de Janeiro, stands as an enduring symbol of the new spirit of global cooperation which characterized the Earth Summit and the Global Forum. An initiative of the Bahá'í International Community and its national Brazilian affiliate, the monument was designed by the renowned Brazilian artist and sculptor, Mr. Siron Franco. As part of the closing ceremonies of these twin historic events, soil from 40 nations was deposited by children into the five-meter high, hourglass-shaped concrete and ceramic monument. Soil from additional countries is ceremoniously added each year on World Environment Day. Over 80 nations have contributed thus far. Inscribed on the monument, as a reminder of the highest ideals of the Earth Summit and Global Forum, are the following words: "*The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens* - Bahá'u'lláh."

## Advocacy

The Bahá'í world has become increasingly engaged in advocating for conservation and sustainable development

- The Bahá'í International Community and many of its local and national affiliates participated extensively in the entire process leading up to and including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (or Earth Summit). Close to one million copies of statements and concept papers written by the Bahá'í International Community on issues of environment and development were distributed world-wide in several languages. Bahá'í communities active in this historic process worked with their governments and the organizations of civil society. In the process, many Bahá'ís became better educated about the issues addressed by the Earth Summit and became much more globally aware.
- The Bahá'í International Community, in collaboration with other organizations, has hosted two World Forestry Charter Gatherings, one in 1989 and one in 1994. The first World Forestry Charter Gatherings assembled diplomats to the Court of St. James in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s to discuss the state of the world's forests. These Gatherings were initiated by Dr. Richard St. Barbe Baker, who was among the earliest of global environmentalists, and who also began in the 1920s a series of ambitious projects - including travels, field work, lectures and writings - dedicated to bringing world-wide attention to the condition of our environment. The 1989 World Forestry Charter Gathering commemorated the 100th anniversary of Dr. Baker's birth and addressed actual programs aimed at preserving the world's forests. The 1994 Gathering was particularly noteworthy for its focus on the Forest Principles, adopted at the Earth Summit, and for highlighting the need to view the forests as the common heritage of humanity in order to conserve and sustainably manage them into the distant future.
- The Bahá'í International Community is one of the founding members and principle supporters of the Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden for Women, a coalition of organizations formed to raise awareness, particularly among policy makers, of the critical role African women farmers play in ensuring the continent's food security.
- Many Bahá'í communities are now working with local authorities and organizations of civil society to encourage implementation of Agenda 21, the global action-plan for sustainable development adopted by the Earth Summit. For example, Bahá'í communities throughout Germany and the United Kingdom are approaching local authorities (the subject of Chapter 28 of Agenda 21) to discuss promoting the concept of world citizenship as a moral and ethical basis for development. Similarly, Bahá'í communities in Denmark, Sweden and Australia have launched campaigns in schools focusing on world citizenship.
- Bahá'í communities are increasingly involved on the local, national and international levels in conferences, round-tables, commissions and coalitions, many in connection with major UN consultations. Bahá'ís participated extensively in the Earth Summit process, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the '94 Global Forum, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

## Bahá'í Holy Places and Gardens

Bahá'í Holy Places and Bahá'í Houses of Worship are known throughout the world for their exquisite gardens. The gardens at the Bahá'í World Centre, so dear to Bahá'í pilgrims as havens for spiritual rejuvenation, also attract large numbers of tourists from all parts of the globe. Their beauty and tranquillity inspire a deep respect for the natural world. The metaphor of nature that runs throughout the Bahá'í Scriptures has found expression in a very practical, yet sublime, form in these gardens

The spiritual and administrative centers of the Bahá'í World are by design situated together and surrounded by magnificent beauty. Indeed, it is this design which inspires reflection on the idea that spiritual development, administration of community affairs, and respect for nature are inseparable elements of all programs aimed at promoting the well-being of humanity while building a sustainable world civilization.

Youth from around the world, offering a year of service at the World Centre, serve as volunteers in the Bahá'í Gardens. Many of these young people have not only developed, through this work, a deeper respect for nature, but have carried back to their own communities an abiding commitment to conservation

## III. Bahá'í Initiatives in the Fields of Conservation and Sustainable Development: Future Prospects

Development, for Bahá'ís, implies a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and material requirements of life on earth. The Bahá'í approach to development is organic and seeks to harmonize the seemingly paradoxical concepts of globalism and decentralization. Overall direction and guiding principles are established on the international - and often national - levels, helping to ensure a sense of global process and mission in all development activities. At the same time, actual programs and activities arise largely from individual or community initiative, are driven by community decision-making processes and are based on the principle of universal participation. They are, therefore, likely to address the needs, conditions and aspirations of the local/national society. Because of this approach, it is not possible to detail the projects and programs that communities will undertake in the coming years; however, the broad features of future development activities can be suggested

In the years immediately ahead, the Bahá'í world community will, no doubt, expand the scope and range of its conservation and

- education and training efforts focusing on conservation issues;
- projects, both individual and community-based, aimed at the protection and restoration of the environment;
- the use of the arts to inspire an active commitment to environmental protection and development; and
- advocacy for sustainable development at local, national, and international levels.

The ongoing, vast extension of the gardens at the Bahá'í World Centre, including the erection of terraces from the foot to the summit of Mount Carmel, will increase the grandeur and majesty of this focal point of the Bahá'í World while providing an extended environment in which a deep respect for nature and a life-long commitment to its care and protection can be developed. Likewise, the grounds around Bahá'í properties, including Bahá'í Houses of Worship, will continue to be beautified to serve as an inspiration for all who visit them.

The Bahá'í world will intensify the process of seeking to apply spiritual principles of unity, justice, solidarity and moderation to the economic, technological, social and political challenges of today. It will increasingly collaborate with like-minded individuals and groups - including organizations of civil society, government and others - to help bring about the fundamental changes needed in society if peace and sustainable development are to be realized

The Bahá'í world will work ceaselessly to develop in all its members - children, youth and adults - a deep respect for nature as a reflection of the majesty of the Divine, and a global consciousness based on the spiritual principles of unity in diversity, justice, love and service

Bahá'í communities will endeavor to grow in solidarity and practical experience, thereby demonstrating a new pattern of development at the grass roots capable of restoring both human dignity and the environment, and showing that the unity of the human race is not a utopian ideal but a practical possibility

Above all, the Bahá'í world will continue to foster hope for the future. It will confidently share its conviction that, by following God's will for today, humanity will be transformed, unity and peace will be attained, and a prosperous, sustainable world civilization - the fruits of which will be enjoyed by the entire human family - will emerge and extend into the distant future

## Notes

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