

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom

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95 youth conferences

The National Spiritual Assembly was thrilled to receive the recent announcement from the Universal House of Justice of the convocation of 95 youth conferences across the world, and to learn that one has been designated to take place in London over 26-28 July. The National Assembly immediately focused on the question of how to help as many youth as possible avail themselves of this unparalleled opportunity, and also how to help those youth invite others who recognise “in the methods and instruments of the Plan potent means for movement towards a better society”. Indeed, to provide a level of financial support to assist youth who are unable, either through their own, their family’s or their community’s resources, to attend the conference, the National Assembly has established a Fund for this purpose to which all are invited to contribute.

The Assembly hopes that—with suitable preparations, accompaniment and a minimisation of possible distractions—the vision of the House of Justice for this conference can be realised and that we will witness this summer a further step change in the capacity and energy of the youth, as well as the entire rest of the community, in their commitment to a life of service. The prospects for this summer are exciting indeed!

The individual, the institutions and the community – evolving relationships

In recent meetings, the National Assembly has given considerable time to exploring the evolving relationship between “the individual, the institutions and the community—the three protagonists in the Divine Plan” which, the House of Justice tells us in its 28 December 2010 message “are being shaped under the direct influence of His Revelation, and a new conception of each, appropriate for a humanity that has come of age, is emerging.” The House of Justice states that these relationships “are undergoing a profound transformation”, and that “at a fundamental level these relationships are characterized by cooperation and reciprocity, manifestations of the interconnectedness that governs the universe.”

We can gain a glimpse of the emerging relationship between the individual and the institutions and community when we reflect upon these further words:

So it is that the individual, with no regard for “personal benefits and selfish advantages,” comes to see him- or herself as “one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing,” whose only

desire is to carry out His laws. So it is that the friends come to recognize that “wealth of sentiment, abundance of good-will and effort” are of little avail when their flow is not directed along proper channels, that “the unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and sacrifice,” and that “the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper realization of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal.” And so it is that all come to discern with ease those areas of activity in which the individual can best exercise initiative and those which fall to the institutions alone. “With heart and soul”, the friends follow the directives of their institutions, so that, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains, “things may be properly ordered and well arranged”. This, of course, is not a blind obedience; it is an obedience that marks the emergence of a mature human race which grasps the implications of a system as far-reaching as Bahá’u’lláh’s new World Order.

In this connection, the Assembly explored many questions including: What might those “areas of activity” be where individual initiative is best exercised and those which fall under the institutions? Can individuals promote a private initiative, whether in the arena of business, social action, the arts or other fields, within the Bahá’í community; and if so, how would one go about it? Exploring these and other questions and striving to apply the guidance to hand in answering them will surely continue to be a source of learning for the National Assembly, as well as for individual Bahá’ís and the community as a whole, in years to come.

Meeting with the Training Institute Board

At the call of our beloved Counsellors, Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi and Firouzeh Moqbel, and as an addition to its regular meetings, the National Assembly was delighted to meet with the members of the Training Institute Board for the United Kingdom and the National Coordinator for a weekend-long discussion on the strength of the educational process. Among the topics covered were ways to develop and strengthen the scheme of coordination and the opportunities that exist to work with certain receptive populations. Being concerned as to the effectiveness of the operation of the institute process, the National Assembly found this to be a most elevating consultation and was greatly encouraged at the efforts of the Training Institute Board and its coordinators across the country.

Representation at the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury

The National Assembly was pleased to receive an invitation to send a representative to the enthronement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, and is pleased to say that in recent days one of its members did participate in this special event.

Statement on Social Action

Together with Counsellor Shirin Fozdar-Foroudi, the National Assembly spent a considerable amount of time studying and reflecting on a statement on social action that had been prepared by the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá’í World Centre. Rich with insights, this document was tremendously helpful in broadening the National Assembly’s understanding of this significant sphere of activity within the Divine Plan.

Prayers for the community

At each of its meetings, time is set aside for the National Assembly to offer supplications on behalf of the friends in the UK, for the institutions and their services, for the believers facing persecutions in Iran and for the happiness, wellbeing and development of all humanity. As a matter of course and when it has been informed, the Assembly also prays for individuals who have, for example, recently enrolled in the Faith, married, or passed away. It is also very pleased to offer prayers on behalf of any individuals who wish to have their name or those of their friends or family added to the prayer list.

If any members of the community would like to add names to this list, they may do so by writing to nsa@bahai.org.uk, including a brief indication of the reason for the prayer request.

Local Spiritual Assembly training materials

The National Spiritual Assembly has considered the development of the Local Spiritual Assembly training materials in light of Convention resolutions in past years. After considerable consultation, it now feels that at this stage, and in light of plans for the future development of the Ruhi sequence of courses, that it will not facilitate the development of comprehensive training materials.

The National Assembly is extensively reworking the *Notes for Guidance for Local Spiritual Assemblies* and these will be available in the near future. Friends are also referred to compilations and publications such as those on consultation, 'Local Spiritual Assemblies', 'Lifeblood of the Cause' and others for further deepening as necessary.

Change in meeting dates

Owing to the timing of the youth conference, the National Assembly decided to change some of its meeting dates as follows:

Old dates	New dates
21-23 June 2013	28-30 June
26-28 July 2013	2-4 August
13-15 September 2013	20-22 September

In addition, the dates of the National Assembly's last scheduled meeting in 2013 were changed from 6-8 December to 29 November – 1 December.

We take this opportunity to wish all the dear friends in the UK a very happy Naw-Rúz!

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly