



## Bahá'í theological statement on green pilgrimage

### Green Pilgrimage Network

Sites of pilgrimage have been sanctified by their association with holy souls, which elevates the station of these sacred places to one worthy not only of respect, but also of reverence. By engaging with the spirit of these spots, we can be assisted to rise to a higher level of consciousness about our responsibilities to our world and to translate this into practical expressions.

So central is the role of pilgrimage in a person's spiritual development that Bahá'u'lláh made it an obligation to be performed at least once in the lifetime of any believer financially able to make the journey. At the present time, Bahá'í pilgrimage takes the form of a nine-day programme of visits to the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb and places associated with the lives of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, all located on or near the coast of northern Israel, between Haifa and Nahariya. Pilgrim groups are scheduled during a nine-month season that runs from late October until the end of July. The logistical hub of the pilgrimage programme is in Haifa.

Participants in this programme reflect the diversity and geographical spread of the Bahá'í community, and the Bahá'í institutions are working to make pilgrimage ever more widely accessible to believers from all walks of life and all 235 countries and territories where the Faith has taken root. As the community grows and matures, we fully expect the flow of Bahá'í pilgrims to increase dramatically in the years to come.

Since it requires international travel, Bahá'í pilgrimage necessarily involves substantial economic and environmental costs, but greater efforts can be made to promote values of simplicity, to minimise waste and other harmful side-effects, and to ensure that the planning for future expansion of the pilgrimage programme takes full account of environmental factors and the need for sustainable solutions, all without sacrificing the spiritual nature of the pilgrimage experience or the goal of making it universally accessible.



*Shrine of the Báb, Haifa*

## **Pledge of Support**

Within the framework outlined above, the Bahá'í World Centre will work closely with the Municipality of Haifa and other local stake-holders to reduce the environmental impact associated with Bahá'í visitors by promoting the use of public transport; propagating sound environmental practices in the hospitality sector; improving the management of scarce resources such as energy and water; reducing waste and ensuring that more of it is recycled; and encouraging individual pilgrims to play an active and responsible role in caring for the environment both during their pilgrimage and back in their home communities. Recognising that we have much to learn and a great deal to do to improve the environmental sustainability of our own operations, our approach will be incremental and collaborative.

We look forward to collaborating with all the other participants in this international, inter-faith endeavour, utilising the diverse facets of human creativity from the spiritual to the technical, to make the world a better place, in terms of both the physical environment of the planet and the wellbeing of its present and future inhabitants.