**PRESS RELEASE**

Thousands participate in celebrations in the Bahá’í gardens and the Haifa German Colony

HAIFA, Israel, 3 April 2009 – Thousands participated today in celebrations in the Bahá’í gardens and the German Colony in Haifa to mark the recognition of the Bahá’í sites in Haifa and `Akko as World Heritage Sites.

Under the heading “A beauty of a day”, the Bahá’ís and the Haifa municipality organized a real celebration for the residents of Haifa and the surrounding area. Almost ten thousand residents turned out around mid-day on Friday in order to ascend or descend the lower terraces of the Bahá’í gardens, from the golden-domed shrine to Ben Gurion Avenue in the German Colony, freely and without the need to take part in a guided tour, to enjoy the gardens and the view, to participate in activities for parents and children, and to view presentations by the gardeners and those working on the restoration of the shrine.

At the same time, the German Colony at the foot of the gardens hosted a festival of giant chalk paintings drawn and colored by children on the asphalt surface of the street. A festive ambience was provided by various musical groups, of different sizes and with different instruments, performing different types of music on six stages set up along the avenue.

Starting in the morning hours of Friday, two artists originally from the former Soviet Union had drawn about 30 pictures of natural landscapes and animals, to be colored by the large crowd with thousands of ecological chalks purchased by the Haifa Municipality. These chalks are made of natural materials, wash easily and do not create dust while being used.