



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message from Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland
To REPAM's Conference**

Monday, 20th March, 2017

As President of Ireland, I am delighted to have this opportunity to commend the great work of the Red Eclesial PanAmazónica – REPAM – in the service of the indigenous peoples of the Amazonia. I also wish to send my very best wishes to the new Escuela de Derechos Indígenas, and to all of you, indigenous leaders, on your visit to Washington.

May this study trip, the new contacts you are establishing, the conversations you are having here, reinforce your determination to defend the rights of the communities you represent, including their right to live peaceful and harmonious lives in their ancestral lands.

I am delighted, too, that space has been made in today's event to remember the name of Roger Casement, an Irish revolutionary who, at the turn the last century, so powerfully denounced the enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon and the Congo by the rubber industry of the day.

At this beginning of a new century, the fundamental questions Roger Casement raised about power and human rights, about the rights of indigenous communities, and about the rules guiding development strategies, the extraction of natural resources and international trade – those questions are still valid.

Yet this new century is also offering new hopes: hopes that are arising from the great spirit and tireless work of activists and community leaders such as yourselves; hopes that are prospering on the new global awareness of the profound interdependence between all those who dwell on this fragile planet; and also hopes that are reinforced by the recent international agreements on climate change and sustainable development.

May we, amigos, continue to sow, together, the seeds of a new ethics for our times – the ethics of a caring, non-exploitative civilisation flourishing in harmony with nature, for the sake of future generations.

Michael D. Higgins
President of Ireland