

Dear friends,

I am delighted to be sending you the attached St Patrick's Day Greetings, from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins to Irish people around the world, in honour of our National Day at the end of this week.

As President Higgins says so eloquently, St Patrick's Day is an opportunity for the global Irish family to acknowledge our shared heritage and culture and to celebrate an Irishness of which we can all be proud.

Ireland certainly stands proud in Spain on this St. Patrick's Day with celebrations being organised all over the country from Bilbao to Valencia and Barcelona to Tenerife. A guide to these events has been published on the Embassy website, and is accessible at this link <http://www.irlanda.es/home/index.aspx?id=87558>

I am happy to announce that for the second year running the **city of Madrid will join in the Global Greening initiative**, promoted by Tourism Ireland. The Ayuntamiento of Madrid has kindly agreed to our request to light the iconic Cibeles fountain in green **on the evening of Friday 16 March** to herald the dawn of St Patrick's Day 2012. I hope that the Madrileños among you will have an opportunity to witness the spectacle at first hand.

Also on the evening of 16 March, the **Spanish-Irish Business Network (SIBN) has organised a sell-out Charity Gala Ball** at the prestigious Circulo de Bellas Artes in Madrid in aid of the Barretstown Children's Charity. I want to salute this great achievement by the Organising Committee, led by SIBN President Emma Naismith, and to encourage those of who may not be able to make the event on the night to show your support for the cause by donating on-line at [http://www.mycharity.ie/event/st\\_patricks\\_day](http://www.mycharity.ie/event/st_patricks_day). It promises to be a wonderful evening, celebrating the historic and unique friendship and contemporary trade and business connections between Spain and Ireland, with the best of Irish and Spanish food and drinks and a taste of traditional Irish music and dance. Spanish Agriculture Minister Miguel Arias-Cañete, who studied at Trinity College, will be a guest of honour.

This St. Patrick's Day, with the Irish economy growing again, the Taoiseach has announced that the Irish message around the world is that now is the time to invest in – and benefit from - Ireland's recovery. The Government has designated 2013 as the year of **The Gathering**, a call to the Irish Diaspora and to people with a love of Ireland – of whom there are many in Spain as we know – to visit Ireland in 2013. This initiative is an open invitation to the wider world to connect with the people of Ireland in business, the arts, sports, communities and public life. Twelve major events, including Bloomsday, St. Patrick's Day and the Heineken Rugby Cup final, will be used as a focus for the initiative and we will make sure to keep you up to date with any developments. You can also register to receive updates on The Gathering's website at <http://www.thegatheringireland.com/>.

Finally, St. Patrick's Day this year falls close to a hugely significant Spanish anniversary – the **bicentenary of the Constitución de Cádiz, la Pepa**, which was signed on 19 March 1812. I am proud to say that a number of figures of Irish origin played a role in the dynamic political and military debates here in Spain which culminated in the *Constitución*. Names with echoes of Ireland include Juan O'Donjú O'Ryan, Luis de Lacy, Almirante Brown, Ramón Power y Giralt, José María Blanco White, J. Bernardo O'Gavan y Guerra, Enrique O'Donnell and James Florence Burke among others.

To commemorate these and other figures the Spanish Council for Advanced Academic Studies (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas*) in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, the Embassy of Ireland, the Council for Spanish-Irish Historical Studies, and the *Fundación Dos de Mayo*, will organise an international conference in Cadiz **this coming October** entitled **The Irish Communities in Spain and the Cortes de Cádiz, 1812**. The Embassy is delighted to be associated with this important historical reflection on the shared ties between Ireland and Spain.

On that note, I would like to wish you all a very Happy St Patrick's Day – Lá Fhéile Pádraig daoibh go léir - and to thank you for your ongoing friendship and support.

Justin Harman  
Ambassador of Ireland