

## **INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE**

### **Updates – February 2024**

#### **BRAZIL**

##### **IRI BRAZIL SECURES COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ACRE**

At a meeting attended by the president of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Acre, Deputy Luis Gonzaga, and the National Facilitator of IRI Brazil, Carlos Vicente, on February 2nd in Rio Branco-AC, a cooperation agreement was established for the development of activities to raise awareness among the state's deputies and the population in general about preventing and responding to climate disasters, combating forest fires and deforestation, as well as the search for alternatives for the sustainable development of the state. The following joint actions were defined: 1) carrying out a scientific immersion at CEMADEN and INPE with the participation of President Luis Gonzaga and other deputies to be chosen by him; (2) holding lectures on alternatives for sustainable development; 3) developing awareness-raising actions for the deputies and staff of the Legislative Assembly and for the general public based on the screening of the film *Amazônia Viva*, and; 4) support for the development of proposals for vocational training in digital technologies for urban and indigenous youth. The establishment of the cooperation agenda between IRI Brazil and the Legislative Assembly of Acre is an important step towards helping the state's legislators better understand the importance of socio-environmental public policies, especially those aimed at reducing forest loss, and to start giving political and institutional support to strengthening environmental governance and helping to qualify the debate in the state and combat the strong resistance that exists in the state's political and business circles against this agenda.

##### **IRI BRAZIL SECURES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ACRE**

In a meeting with Dr. Marco Lucena, Executive Director of the Association of Municipalities of Acre - AMAC, in the city of Rio Branco-Ac, on February 3 2024, an agreement was reached to carry out joint agendas throughout 2024. The first activity would be for AMAC representatives to take part in a scientific immersion at CEMADEN and INPE and to give talks to specialists on topics related to sustainable development. The creation of a working agenda with AMAC is strategic for the restoration and preservation of the rainforest because it allows for sensitizing and engaging the mayors of the state of Acre, together with their main advisors and the technical staff of the municipalities, providing them with knowledge, data and connecting them to the debate on alternatives for the sustainable development of the municipalities they govern.

## **IRI BRAZIL STATE CHAPTER IN ACRE MEETS TO SET ACTIONS FOR THE YEAR**

The IRI Acre chapter met with the IRI Brazil national team on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to initiate planning of activities for the year. Two priorities were defined: 1) expanding awareness-raising and training activities for religious leaders; and 2) carrying out the second edition of the campaign to reduce forest fires and deforestation. Mobilizing and motivating the leaders of IRI Acre will enable this year's campaign to reduce fires and deforestation to reach a wider audience and influence the adoption of preventive measures by the federal and state governments and local councils. It will also facilitate the launch of other local chapters in important municipalities.

## **IRI BRAZIL PREPARES FIRST VERSION OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL CHURCHES MANUAL**

IRI Brazil has developed a publication that brings together a set of environmental actions that can be implemented in religious institutions and that contribute to creating greater awareness about caring for nature, in respect for the principles of Christian stewardship. The manual will be used in awareness-raising, trainings and local action activities carried out by IRI Brazil, as well as being distributed to all the religious leaders who are part of the IRI Brazil network and to partner organizations.

## **IRI BRAZIL COMPLETES PILOT PHASE OF CARBON NEUTRAL CHURCHES PROJECT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT IN FOREST RESTORATION**

A total of five religious institutions were selected for the pilot phase of a Carbon Neutral Churches Project: Assembléia de Deus Church (Pará), Santa Maria Cathedral of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil (Pará), Terreiro Manso Massumbando, Candomblé Bantu (Pará), Comunidade Batista Vida (Acre) and the Metropolitan Catholic Cathedral of Cuiabá (Mato Grosso - incomplete). The intention is that by the end of 2024 the five religious institutions will have neutralized their emissions by planting trees so that they can serve as demonstration units to raise awareness and educate religious communities about the seriousness of the climate and deforestation crises and motivate them to adopt individual, collective and business actions. The project is also designed to help generate greater support for environmental public policies.

## **IRI BRAZIL MEETS WITH EVANGELICAL LEADERS**

In early February, IRI Brazil held a meeting with Evangelical leaders in Manaus, bringing together participants from 6 different churches (Refúgio Church, Manaus Presbyterian Church, União Baptist Church, Cachoeirinha Baptist Church, Resurrection Baptist Church, Memorial Baptist Church, Amarela Church), the Brazilian Association of Christians in Science, and the Compassion Institute. The main focus of the convening was to explore ways the church can collaborate effectively in tackling climate disasters and preserving the Amazon rainforest. 20 evangelical leaders representing various organizations took part, the Amazônia Viva film was screened, and leaders expressed a commitment to implement sustainable practices in their respective communities.

## **IRI BRAZIL ADVANCES SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH COMMUNITIES IMPACTED BY FLOODS**

IRI Brazil has launched a campaign in support of the victims of the floods in the state of Acre. The social media campaign began on February 27th and ran for seven days, with now the possibility of extending longer. The campaign has been shared with all 9 of the IRI Brazil state chapters, as well as larger networks across the country. The next step will be the support of 9 major evangelical influencers in the IRI Brazil network, who together have almost 5 million followers. In the first two days alone, the campaign reached almost 60,000 people.

## **IRI BRAZIL FEATURED IN PROMINENT EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE**

IRI Brazil's work was featured in Show da Fé, one of the main magazines in the evangelical field and a monthly publication of the International Church of the Grace of God. The theme of this issue was "Caring for creation - Churches also engage in the task of raising awareness among Christians about environmental problems". In the article, National Facilitator Carlos Vicente spoke about the importance of involving religious leaders and communities in the protection of forests. A link to the article can be found [here](#).

## **IRI BRAZIL PARTICIPATES IN REPAM EVENT, MEETS WITH LEADERSHIP**

IRI Brazil was part of an event promoted by the Panamazon Ecclesial Network - REPAM and the Laudato Si Movement, where representatives of the German Catholic Church Bank (BKC) presented their strategy for combating illegal mining in Brazil. Several Catholic institutions and organizations of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) were present. The National Facilitator of IRI Brazil, Carlos Vicente, gave a brief presentation of the work carried out. Several joint activities between IRI Brazil and REPAM were defined, such as a scientific dialogue on alternatives for the preservation and sustainable development of the Amazon. IRI Brazil also met with João Gutemberg Sampaio, Executive Secretary of REPAM, and Rodrigo Fadul, Deputy Secretary of REPAM. The visit took place at the IRI Brazil office with the aim of strengthening ties between the organizations. IRI Brazil was invited to take part in the activities commemorating the 10th anniversary of the creation of REPAM.

## **COLOMBIA**

### **IRI COLOMBIA PREPARES 17 GUIDES TO SUPPORT THE FORMULATION OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS WITH A FOCUS ON FOREST PROTECTION**

IRI Colombia has developed 17 conceptual guides to support the formulation of Territorial Development Plans with an Amazonian environmental approach. The guides are aimed at the mayors' offices of 14 municipalities and the governors' offices of three Amazonian departments, covering a total of 42 local chapters. Their creation is part of the commitment statement and programmatic agreement "A new opportunity of hope for the Amazon", signed by the mayors and governors during their electoral campaigns. The guides propose specific

content to direct and highlight actions aimed at combating deforestation in the territorial planning instruments that will guide the development of municipalities and departments over the next four years. IRI Colombia's proposal has been designed considering the government programs of each territorial entity and pursues three key ideas: ensure the legal mandate to stop deforestation, recognize the transformative potential of community participation in the conservation of the Amazon rainforest, and identify possible sources of funding for the conservation and restoration of the Amazon ecosystem.

### **IRI COLOMBIA SECURES COMMITMENTS WITH THIRTEEN MAYORS AND THREE GOVERNORS WHO COMMITTED TO INCLUDE PROPOSALS TO PROTECT FORESTS IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

In the framework of the local and regional advocacy campaign carried out since last year, where 16 debates were held with 62 mayoral and gubernatorial candidates in the municipalities and departments where IRI Colombia has a presence through its local chapters, during the month of February a series of strategic bilateral meetings were organized with mayors, governors, and their planning teams. The objective was to present them with IRI Colombia's proposal to be included in the Territorial Development Plans. This initiative responds to the commitment made by IRI Colombia in the programmatic agreement "A New Opportunity of Hope for the Amazon", with the purpose of ensuring that the Territorial Development Plans have the necessary conditions to formulate and implement programs aimed at protecting the Amazon rainforests. As a result of these meetings, the mayors of San José del Guaviare, Calamar, El Retorno, Miraflores, Cartagena del Chairá, San Vicente del Caguán, Puerto Rico, Curillo and Solano; La Macarena, as well as the governors of Guaviare, Caquetá and Putumayo, committed to integrate IRI Colombia's proposals in these planning documents and to include members of the IRI local chapters in the Territorial Planning Councils, appointments that have a term of 8 years.

### **IRI COLOMBIA PUBLISHES TWO OPINION COLUMNS IN A MAJOR NATIONAL NEWSPAPER**

IRI Colombia published two opinion columns in a major national newspaper, El Espectador. The columns addressed the seriousness of the fire season that affected the country during January, as well as the relevance of formulating Territorial Development Plans with an Amazonian environmental approach and promoting participatory planning spaces such as the Territorial Planning Councils, where members of the IRI Colombia local chapters participate. The columns, entitled "Without the Amazon forests, the cities will continue to burn" and "From words to deeds: development plans with an environmental focus", were signed by Bishop Francisco Duque, president of the Interreligious Council of Colombia, and Pastor Édgar Castaño, president of the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia, on behalf of IRI-Colombia. These pieces were published in the digital edition of the prestigious national newspaper El Espectador, with nationwide reach, and also disseminated by regional media. The publication of these columns not only highlights the concern for the environmental challenges facing Colombia, but also highlights the importance of intersectoral collaboration and citizen participation in the search for solutions. Moreover, by being disseminated nationally and regionally, these columns contribute to raising awareness among a broad public of the urgency of protecting tropical

forests by controlling deforestation and promoting sustainable development in harmony with the environment. There editorial by Bishop Duque can be found [here](#), and the editorial by Pastor Castaño can be found [here](#).

### **IRI COLOMBIA MEETS WITH AMAZONIAN INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH - SINCHI TO EXPLORE PARTNERSHIP FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS, LOCAL OFFICIALS**

Blanca Echeverry, National Facilitator of IRI Colombia met with Luz Marina Mantilla, Director of the Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research – SINCHI on February 7<sup>th</sup> in Bogotá to explore opportunities for collaboration between the two organizations. The main objective of the meeting was to identify areas of synergy to carry out scientific training activities aimed at impacting diverse audiences, including religious, political, and economic leaders. In this sense, IRI Colombia would commit to contribute its extensive network of local chapters, its convening capacity and the commitment of its members in these activities. On the other hand, SINCHI would contribute its research and scientific content, and host trainings for key religious leaders and elected officials on the science of deforestation. By joining forces, both organizations can maximize their impact and broaden their reach, leveraging the complementary expertise and resources that each brings to the table. In addition, by targeting diverse audiences, they promote greater awareness and action in the protection and conservation of tropical forests, thus strengthening efforts for sustainable development in the region.

### **IRI COLOMBIA PUBLISHES MONTHLY COLUMN ON PROCESS OF ACCOMPANYING POLICYMAKING**

As part of its communication strategy to raise awareness of the seriousness of deforestation and its effects on climate change, IRI Colombia has implemented the monthly publication of opinion columns in widely-circulated national and regional media outlets. These columns, carefully written by experts in the field, seek to highlight the urgency of halting forest loss, as well as to underscore the direct relationship between deforestation and climate change, with an emphasis on the rights of indigenous peoples. The most recent columns addressed the seriousness of the fire season that affected the country during January, as well as the relevance of formulating Territorial Development Plans with an Amazonian environmental approach and promoting participatory planning spaces such as the Territorial Planning Councils, where members of the local chapters of IRI Colombia participate. The monthly column not only seeks to inform the public about the current situation, but also to display how IRI Colombia is committed to accompanying the formulation of policies and the implementation of territorial development plans that comprehensively address these environmental challenges. In addition, by maintaining a constant presence in the media, the columns ensure that the public remains informed about IRI Colombia's actions and progress in its fight against deforestation and climate change. By highlighting relevant and emerging issues in each issue, IRI Colombia is demonstrating its commitment to research, analysis, and practical action in protecting forests and promoting sustainable development. The columns can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

## **IRI COLOMBIA PREPARES FOR BIODIVERSITY SUMMIT**

IRI Colombia actively participated in the workshop "Challenges and Opportunities for Updating National Biodiversity Plans from the Colombian Amazon and on the Road to COP16," convened by Rainforest Foundation Norway. In the event, various indigenous and non-governmental organizations and IRI Colombia met to reflect on the challenges posed by the goals of the Global Biodiversity Framework. In addition, concrete proposals were formulated for updating the National Biodiversity Plans and for effective participation in the next United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, scheduled to take place from October 21 to November 1 in Colombia. During the workshop, presentations were given on various relevant topics, such as the latest developments of the Global Biodiversity Framework, the 2023 National Biodiversity Plan, the relationship between deforestation and the national policy of total peace, the Escazú Agreement, the implementation of carbon credits in the Amazon, as well as the management of non-municipalized areas and the Indigenous Environmental Management Plans (PAOI). IRI Colombia's active participation in the workshop demonstrates its continued commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the Amazon region and to collaborating with other organizations in the search for effective solutions. The discussion focused on a results-oriented approach to controlling deforestation, protecting the environment and promoting sustainability.

## **IRI COLOMBIA PARTICIPATES IN "ESCUCHA LA AMAZONIA" ALLIANCE PREPARATIONS FOR 2024**

IRI Colombia and the other organizations that make up the "Escucha la Amazonia" alliance held a strategic meeting to analyze the results achieved since 2022 and to advance in the definition of the advocacy route to be followed in 2024. Participating organizations included Gaia Amazonas, the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (FCDS), the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC), the Etnollano Foundation, The Nature Conservancy (TNC Colombia), WWF Colombia, the Environment and Society Association, and IRI Colombia. During the meeting, an exhaustive analysis of the inputs and results obtained to date was carried out, focusing on key issues such as the National Environmental System and the Escazú Agreement. In addition, they reflected on the strategic aspects that will be addressed in the advocacy work, with special emphasis on the next UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP16), scheduled for October this year in Cali. The collaboration and coordination between these organizations represents a joint effort to promote policies and actions that contribute to the protection and conservation of the Colombian Amazon. By reviewing progress and consolidating inputs, a solid foundation is ensured for the development of effective and coordinated advocacy strategies to address the most pressing environmental challenges and promote sustainable development in the region.

## **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)**

### **IRI DRC WORKING TO BUILD ON SIX COMMITMENTS OF THE HEAD OF STATE, ADVANCE PLANNING FOR NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

In order to obtain the involvement of civil society organizations, the private sector, and state services, IRI DRC organized three working sessions in February with a team of 10 people and with the goal was of developing Terms of Reference for an IRI DRC national conference, which will advance strategies and advocacy across religious leadership and faith-based organizations to actions that protect forests, as well as a contribution note to six commitments of the Head of State. Commissions have been set up to produce the program of work. The IRI DRC national conference will be a major step towards raising awareness and building the capacity of religious leaders, and to obtain their commitment to accompany the national government in the protection of forests and the improvement of the living conditions of local communities and indigenous peoples dependent on forests.

### **IRI DRC PARTICIPATES IN CONVENING OF NATIONAL CONSULTATION FOR INSTITUTE OF NEW CLIMATE ECONOMY FOR THE CONGO BASIN, ADVANCES WORK TO SECURE FOREST COMMITMENT**

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, IRI DRC took part in a national consultation in Kinshasa at the Palace of the Nation on a new Institute of the New Climate Economy for the Congo Basin. The meeting was chaired by the Advisor to the Head of State on Climate Matters. Several stakeholders took part in the meeting, including civil society organizations, the private sector, technical and financial partners and state services. During the consultation meeting, the IRI DRC national facilitator exchanged with the Advisor to the Head of State on the priority of integrating a forest protection component into the six commitments of the Head of State. On this, guidelines and agreements were agreed so that the contributions of religious leaders through IRI DRC could be brought to the President of the Republic.

### **IRI DRC MEETS WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CONGOLESE INSTITUTE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION**

The National Facilitator of IRI DRC held a working session with the Director General of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation to present IRI DRC, explore mechanisms for collaboration with religious leaders, and to discuss the strategies to secure commitments to protect forests from the Head of State of the Democratic Republic of Congo. During their exchanges, the two pledged to collaborate for the protection of populations living around parks and protected areas through awareness raising and conflict resolution by involving religious leaders. Regarding the contribution to the work around securing a 7<sup>th</sup> commitment from the current administration around the protection of forests, the Director General made two experts available to IRI DRC to work on the proposal and bring the vision of ICCN to the note. The two organizations also agreed to contribute to preparations for Earth Day, when IRI DRC will hold a national conference to build visibility and momentum around this agenda. The Director General



pledged to mobilize other religious leaders who are around the President of the Republic for involvement in advocacy.

### **IRI DRC ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, IRI DRC held a meeting of its Advisory Council at the office of the Secretary General of CENCO. The agenda of the meeting included reading and adoption of the minutes of the last meeting, follow-up of decisions taken at the last meeting, an IRI DRC 2023 Activity and Financial Report, analysis of the IRI DRC 2024 action plan and budget, and resource mobilization. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary General of CENCO and Coordinator of IRI-DRC/CENCO. A video overview of the meeting can be seen [here](#).

### **INDONESIA**

#### **IRI INDONESIA PARTICIPATES IN FORMULATION AND LAUNCH OF FATWA ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

IRI Indonesia participated in the formulation and launch of the Indonesian Ulama Council's Fatwa (Islamic Rule) number 86 /2023 On the Law for Controlling Global Climate Change. The initiative aimed to integrate religious perspectives into the discourse on climate change and fostered a holistic approach toward environmental conservation. Included in the fatwa are the rules of law that: (1) All actions that can cause damage to nature and have an impact on the climate crisis are haram; (2) Uncontrolled deforestation and forest burning that destroys natural ecosystems, causing massive releases of greenhouse gases, as well as reducing the earth's ability to absorb and store carbon is haram; (3) All parties are obligated to contribute to better mitigation and adaptation efforts regarding climate change, reduce the carbon footprint which is not a basic need, and carry out efforts for a just energy transition. The coordinated efforts of IRI Indonesia, alongside MANKA, ECONUSA, Ummah4earth, and LPLH SDA MUI, culminated in the successful planning and execution of the fatwa launch. The groundbreaking fatwa, centering on deforestation and forest burning, holds substantial significance as it directly aligns Islamic principles with rainforest protection. The fatwa serves as religious guidance for all aspects of people's lives, including government, legislators, and the judiciary. The impact extends beyond religious circles, making headlines in national print and online media. Looking ahead, the joint program between IRI Indonesia and the Indonesian Ulama Council ensures the continuous dissemination of the fatwa's principles, solidifying its lasting impact on Indonesian society and setting a precedent for inclusive and impactful environmental advocacy. Additionally, it is envisioned to become a crucial resource for Islamic leaders, influencing their sermons within places of worship and amplifying its impact on spiritual and community levels.

#### **IRI INDONESIA DELIVERS WEBINAR, “RAINFOREST GUARDIANS”**

IRI Indonesia led a webinar on February 28<sup>th</sup> titled "Rainforest Guardians" that facilitated collaboration between religious leaders, environmental activists, and academics to safeguard tropical forests in North Maluku. The lead speakers were Adam Basirun and Aceh by Dr. Delfi



Suganda, both prominent figures in their respective fields of religion, activism, and academia. Throughout the event, the speakers highlighted the vital roles of religious leaders, civil society, academics, and indigenous peoples in tropical forest protection, yielding insights into sustainability strategies and increased awareness. The webinar is the first in a series coordinated in collaboration with the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) on "Forestry and Indigenous Peoples' Rights". The webinar highlighted IRI Indonesia's commitment to cross-religious collaboration for rainforest conservation and indigenous rights and attracted 48 participants from all over Indonesia.

### **IRI INDONESIA FACILITATES IMMERSION VISIT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FOREST**

In the verdant forests of Banten, a field visit was conducted by IRI Indonesia to delve into the traditional resource management practices of the Kasepuhan Karang indigenous community within the Kasepuhan Karang Customary Forest. The visit aimed to deepen understanding of religious leaders of the sustainable forest management practices of indigenous peoples. The visit included the participation of eleven members of the IRI Indonesia Advisory Council, including eight religious leaders and three academics. The visit was facilitated by AMAN West Java. The head of the Kasepuhan Karang community, village leaders, local youth leaders, and about 50 members of the indigenous community also participated. The program commenced with introductions and explanations by the IRI Indonesia Facilitator and the village leader, followed by the planting of robusta and arabica coffee trees, emblematic crops of the local residents, and vital to the livelihood of the indigenous community. Representatives from IRI Indonesia and indigenous youth engaged in tree planting activities in the community forest. The collaboration forged between religious leaders and the indigenous community fosters a united front for the preservation of the customary forest, ensuring its long-term vitality.

### **IRI INDONESIA PARTICIPATES IN EVENT ON RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTALISM**

IRI Indonesia participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the theme 'Religious Identity and Environmental Activism: Actors, strategies, and Networks'. Three religious leaders from IRI participated in the event, which aimed to strengthen religious environmental actions in Indonesia by generating evidence-based knowledge and advocacy to empower religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness. The event was organized by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta (UIN).

### **IRI INDONESIA PUBLISHES FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER**

In the month of February, IRI Indonesia published a bulletin under the theme "Religious and Cultural Collaboration: Supporting the Sustainability of Kasepuhan Karang Indigenous Forests." The bulletin serves as a comprehensive report on IRI Indonesia activities throughout February, primarily focusing on the engagement with the Kasepuhan Karang indigenous community, as well as an article detailing the perspective of the Kasepuhan Karang Banten indigenous community. The bulletin can be found [here](#).

## **PERU**

### **IRI PERU BRIEFS CHRISTIAN LEADERS ON FORESTS, PROGRAM**

IRI Peru was invited to be a keynote speaker in a panel on integral ecology. The event, held on February 16<sup>th</sup> was held for the members of the Christian Life Communities, a lay organization of the Society of Jesus, to promote a greater commitment to the care of the common home. A fundamental aspect of that care is the care and protection of forests and the people who inhabit them. The dialogue allowed for deeper collaboration with the person in charge of the social works of the Jesuits in Peru. IRI Peru was presented to the 40 Christian leaders in attendance.

### **IRI MARAÑÓN PROVIDES INPUT INTO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION, FOREST PROTECTION MEASURES**

The Environmental Commission of the district of Imaza sent a Draft Municipal Ordinance for the Environmental Management of the district to the IRI Marañón for consultation. The document was sent for consultation to Cristina del Águila, an expert in municipal issues and IRI Peru's focal point on these issues. After the analysis, the document was sent to the municipality with contributions from IRI Peru, including a stronger emphasis on forest protection measures.

### **IRI QUILLABAMBA PARTICIPATES IN PREPARATORY MEETING FOR MUNICIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

The Municipal Environmental Commission in Quillabamba convened its members for the preparation of a 2024 Work Plan. The IRI Peru chapter IRI Quillabamba was selected to participate in the components of climate change and risk management, as well as awareness and training. On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the multisectoral commission on environmental education presented the plan to the directors of the educational institutions of La Convención. IRI Peru was provided space in the program to present the Initiative. IRI Quillabamba also introduced the IRI Peru program to Directors of Educational Institutions of the Convention, and IRI Quillabamba presented the work it has been doing to raise awareness and protect forests in the province of La Convención to the directors of educational institutions.

### **IRI PERU DEFENDS WAMPIS PEOPLE AGAINST INVASION OF THEIR TERRITORY BY ILLEGAL MINING**

The Vicariate of Jaén, Monsignor Alfredo Vizcarra, issued a statement in solidarity with the people of the Wampis and asked for action from the state for the uncontrolled advance of illegal mining. IRI Peru called for action from members of Congress and the Minister of the Environment. With engagement of IRI Peru, the Commission on Indigenous Peoples and Environment of the Congress also made a request of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers that the Wampis area be included as a priority area of the Roundtable for the Fight Against

Illegal Mining. In addition, IRI Peru sent a letter to the Minister of the Environment requesting a meeting to discuss the issue and requested support from the other bishops of the Amazon, to join the position of the Vicariate of Jaén.

### **IRI PERU DELIVERS OPINION COLUMN, BRINGING TOGETHER RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS TO CALL FOR PROTECTION OF FORESTS**

IRI Peru worked with three leaders to develop a firm opinion piece on the urgency of curbing threats to forests and life, especially in the Amazon. The opinion column was processed for publication in a national newspaper. The editorial reads, “The murders of indigenous people, the violence and insecurity, the contamination of fish and water, the enormous deforestation of the Amazon and the poverty of our people are real facts. What are we doing with this real information? Can it help us to find paths of justice and development or - rather - generate more violence and destruction? What we do today is the legacy we will leave to those to come, and there will be no better inheritance than to promote a healthy, just and peaceful Peru. History looks, judges, rewards and punishes. And that history is the one that each one of us is writing today. It is up to us to decide, then, on which side of history we want to be.” Find a link to the opinion column [here](#).

### **IRI PERU MEETS WITH MINISTRY OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO PROVIDE INPUT ON FOREST LAW**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, IRI Peru held a meeting with Edgardo Rodríguez, Director General of Human Rights of the Ministry of Human Rights, to analyze the modification of the Forest Law that opens the doors to further deforestation. The law protects deforestation already being carried out to exempt it from the law approved by the EU not to allow products from deforested areas to enter the EU. Within this framework, a Mechanism of Voluntary Due Obedience to Stop Deforestation has been developed that is signed by farmers and producers committing not to deforest and that can be presented to the EU for the sale of their products. Efforts are being made to coordinate with the EU representation for the recognition of this mechanism.