

José Sarukhán recognizes work with Tyler International Award

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Upon learning that he will be awarded, José Sarukhan said he felt "honored and humble".

MEXICO CITY.

The renowned Mexican ecologist and UNAM former Rector José Sarukhán Kermez will receive the prestigious Tyler International Award, created in 1973, which is the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for the Environment, for his scientific contributions in the fields of Biodiversity and institutional strengthening.

The Tyler Prize Executive Committee recalled that when the wetlands of our country were in critical danger due to extensive deforestation, then Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari turned to Dr. Sarukhan for advice on how to show the world that the country valued its natural resources .

In response, the respected scientist devised an institution of the federal government focused exclusively on natural wealth, one of the first of its kind in the world, which named the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Conabio).

25 years away, Conabio manages what is considered the largest nationally accessible national biodiversity database with more than 11.2 million specimens.

"The Conabio is an intersecretarial commission (encompassing 10 federal ministries) that acquires knowledge and shapes conservation policies and the sustainable use of Mexico's natural wealth. This integrated approach to conservation has proven to be so successful that former President Barack Obama's advisory council recommended that it be used as a model for the United States," said Tyler Executive Committee Chair Julia Marton-Lefèvre.

He added that Sarukhan is responsible for identifying a scientific problem and creating a solution that was inserted in the laws and regulations of Mexico, through strong institutions.

"As a world-class scientist, I have published in all the most recognized scientific journals and obtained the highest awards to which every scientist aspires. But I knew that 'seeking knowledge by mere knowledge' was no longer sufficient, and that saving biodiversity in Mexico's Ecosystems would require much more than excellent science," he added.

It has emphasized that few scientists could convince the president to find the budget for an agency that would integrate conservation knowledge at the federal level - but Sarukhan succeeded - and because of that, Mexico's ecosystems now have an institutional oversight that actively protects its biodiversity.

Sarukhán Kermez said he felt "honored and humble" and attributed the success of his work to the social responsibility imparted to him by his mentors, biologist Arturo Gómez-Pompa (also awarded Tyler) and botanist Efraim Hernández Xolocotzi.