

# Award to Sarukán for his work in ecology

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Tyler 2017 award, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for Environment

Laurean to Sarukán for his work in the ecology

The scientist and excretor of the UNAM created 25 years ago the National Commission for the Knowledge and use of Biodiversity.

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Dr. Sarukán will receive his award on May 4 in Washington. Photo: Conabio

Compartir

Dr. José Sarukhán Kermez is recognized for having been rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and for having founded the Institute of Ecology Research, the Doctorate in Ecology as well as the Science Museum of the UNAM, Universum, The first of Its kind in Latin America. However, saving biodiversity in Mexico's ecosystems through institutional strengthening became its main inspiration and is why it is today awarded the Tyler Award for Environmental Achievement 2017, named after some as the environmental Nobel.

Sarukhán has published in practically all the most recognized scientific journals; Has received the honorary

doctorate degree from 10 universities in the world and was the first Mexican to be a member of the Royal Society of England, but for the biologist and ecologist the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Conabio) is And will be one of his greatest achievements.

In the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari the critical moment was lived when the humid forests began to extinguish due to the extensive deforestation. At that moment the president came to the scientist to ask for his support and to demonstrate that the country was concerned about its natural resources. It was then that Sarukhan devised an institution focused exclusively on biodiversity, the pioneering project worldwide.

25 years later, Conabio is a powerful institution, with an annual budget of more than 20 million dollars. It manages the largest database of nationally accessible biodiversity in the world, with more than 11.2 million specimens, and is a mandatory participant in decisions related to Mexican policies on environmental protection, forestry, fisheries, agriculture and international policies.

Today Mexico's ecosystems have institutional oversight that actively protects their biodiversity; Such is the success that even the advisory council of former President Barack Obama recommended that it be used as a model for the United States. "I knew that saving biodiversity in Mexico's ecosystems would require much more than excellent science," said Tyler Prize Executive Committee Chair Julia Marton-Lefèvre, who said that this award is for identifying a scientific problem and creating a solution that was inserted into the laws And regulations of your country.

Dr. Sarukhan said he felt "honored and humble" before the award and attributed his social responsibility to his mentors, the eminent biologist Arturo Gómez-Pompa (also awarded the Tyler) and the botanist Efraim Hernández Xolocotzi.

I have said that "scientists should make people aware of the implications of research in the areas around them and their own health. I think the academic world has a contract with society to raise the voice if the information is not being properly used, perhaps because of Political or economic reasons. I know that not everyone is willing to do that kind of work, but if you feel that you can play this role, which can be called activism or politics, I think you have to do it.

"Scientists must defend the fundamental principle: humanity can not move forward if governments pretend not to know or base themselves on facts and science," he added.

## **About the Tyler Award**

It was established in 1973 by John and Alice Tyler. Today it is awarded by its international executive committee with support from the University of Southern California. Rewards environmental science, health and environmental energy. The winners include environmental policies and health, air and water pollution, disruption and loss of biodiversity, energy and resources.

Dr. Sarukhan will be awarded in Washington on May 4, will receive \$ 200,000 and a commemorative medal. Previously, it was won by primate expert Jane Goodal and ants communication biologist Edward Osborne Wilson.

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