

# Interview | José Sarukhán, the Mexican who won the 'Nobel' of the environment

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Biologist and researcher José Sarukhán Kermez became the winner of the Tyler Prize for the Advancement of the Environment, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for the environment. In an exclusive interview with **Forbes Mexico**, I **have** talks about the prize and destiny that the planet would have if we continue to harm it as it has been until now.

"It is a great honor because it is the most important prize in the environmental issue." Those who have won it, about 70 people, are people of first level and that inspires me to great respect and great affection, "Sarukhán Kermez said In an interview

For the biologist and researcher the condition of the environment in the world is very precarious, since the countries do not make the efforts in the correct sense, with the correct intensity.

"What is going to happen is that we are going to degrade the environment so much that it will not be possible to have a life worthy and adequate for survival. Living and eating conditions are going to drop so much that we are going to get closer To the state of a country like Haiti, which I feel very sorry to occupy," said Sarukhán Kermez.

On the other hand, there is no effort by countries, with the help of society, agencies and the media, to sensitize people to the seriousness of the problem. "There are many economic interests involved and this is not an incentive for politicians to speak truthfully about the problem. It is a problem that has a lot of human behavior and the gigantic waste of resources, things that are often unnecessary," said Sarukhán Kermez.

In Mexico, the biologist and researcher are one of the main problems of the biological biodiversity loss, ie ecosystems.

The Tyler Prize, continues Sarukhán, is a recognition for Mexico and for the efforts of many people to start the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Conabio).

"If there is an act like this, which has to do with valuing what has been done in Mexico by many people for a quarter of a century, it is very satisfying for me and my closest collaborators," he said.

Beyond having won the most important prize in the environment, Sarukhán Kermez considers that his greatest achievement is to have taught his students.

"The most important achievement of my career, I would like to think that they are the students that I have formed." Even more so when I know that many of them are professionals and scientists better than I could be, "said Kermez.

José Sarukhán Kermez also served as rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico from 1989 to 1997. During his tenure at UNAM's rector, the Institute of Ecology was founded and shortly after led to the creation of the Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity ( Conabio).

Kermez has received the honorary doctorate degree from 10 universities in the world. He was the first Mexican to be a member of the Royal Society of England, and in Mexico he is a member of The National College and the Mexican Academy of Sciences. Most of his students are prominent internationally renowned biologists.

## **Tyler Award**

On Thursday, May 4, biologist and researcher José Sarukhán Kermez will have two events held in his honor in Washington DC, where he will accept his prize and gold medal.

The Tyler Environmental Achievement Award was established in 1973 by the late John and Alice Tyler.

The award consists of \$ 200,000, a commemorative medal and a plaque, and is awarded by the Tyler International Executive Committee Executive Committee with administrative support from the University of Southern California.

The name of the prize changed twice at the end of the first decade of his birth. In 1983, the name of the award permanently changed to the Tyler Prize for the Use of the Environment.