

IMD Professor, former Mexico Deputy Environment Minister to lead Nov. 27th forum on ‘sustainability-driven innovation’



MEXICO CITY--Dr. Francisco Szekely, former Deputy Minister of Environmental and Natural Resources in the cabinet of President Vicente Fox and now Professor of Leadership and Sustainability at the top-ranked business school IMD, will lead a roundtable discussion on Tuesday, Nov. 27th at the Four Seasons Hotel in Mexico City on the topic of “Business Sustainability and Innovation.”

The CEO/President breakfast roundtable is sponsored by IMD and the IMD Alumni Club in Mexico, and will take place from 8-9:30 am at the hotel located at 500 Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City. IMD, located in Lausanne, Switzerland, is a top-ranked business school that is focused on real-world executive development and high-impact executive education. The Financial Times ranked IMD first in open programs worldwide (2012) and first in executive education outside the US (2008-2012).

At the roundtable, Dr. Szekely will present a new framework for promoting innovation and competitiveness in organizations, according to Stein Jacobsen, Corporate Director for IMD in Latin America and Iberia. The new framework to be discussed by Dr. Szekely relies on “sustainability-driven innovation processes,” Jacobsen said.

In a recent article “*Strategic Innovation for Sustainability*,” authored with IMD Research Associate Heidi Strebel, Dr. Szekely noted that, “companies are seizing the opportunities in strategic innovation for sustainability.”

“The idea of change for sustainability is gaining ground in the private sector. While it is not yet part of mainstream practice, a growing number of businesses understand the impacts on competitiveness and are beginning to integrate different elements into their core strategies,” the article said. The authors identified “three major types” of innovation for sustainability in their article: “incremental innovation in products and services, radical innovation in processes and value chains,” and “game-changing systemic innovation for sustainability.”

Creating new market opportunities

The framework to be presented by Dr. Szekely at the roundtable will be focused on using sustainability-driven innovation processes, which are aimed at creating new market opportunities for products and services, Jacobsen said.

“Sustainability thinking is a new mind-set that focuses on the many options and possibilities that a systemic approach can provide us when considering societal trends where people expect high quality and reliable products and services which satisfy social needs without harming our planet,” Jacobsen noted.

While serving under President Fox, Dr. Szekely authored a national strategy to promote sustainable development in Mexico. He promoted the creation of national environmental policies and helped form Mexico’s National Commission for Environmental Investment.

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Dr. Szekely, a native of Mexico, is the Mexican and Hungarian Sandoz Family Foundation Professor of Global Leadership and Sustainability at IMD. His work contributes to the understanding of the interrelationships between the emergence of new social, economic and environmental trends as well as the development of long-term, sustainable business strategies. His research explores how companies can include sustainability as a key element of their business strategy; the link between sustainability and business performance; high performance leadership; the development of the leadership required by organizations to sustain long-term business performance over time, as well as the development and expectations of generations "Y" and "Next."

Prior to joining IMD, Professor Szekely served on the faculties of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, MIT, the International Academy of the Environment in Geneva, Switzerland and the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin, Germany where he taught sustainable development and responsible leadership. Additionally, he has worked as a consultant for McKinsey & Company managing clients in Mexico, the US and Holland. Most recently, Professor Szekely was Professor of Business Sustainability and Director of the Center for Responsible Business and Sustainability at the School of Management of the University of Texas at Dallas.

He is the author of seven books, numerous articles and many case studies and is the recipient of the "2011 International Award on the Hot Topic Case Writing" from the European Case Clearing House (ECCH). His works have been published in the European Management Journal, Environmental Assessment Review (MIT), and other refereed journals.

Professor Szekely holds a Mechanical Engineering degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, an M.Sc in Engineering from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, and an M.Sc in Technology & Human Affairs and a Ph.D in Environmental Sciences and Economics from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

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