

LERC Honors Outgoing Mexican Ambassador Fuentes with “Achievement Award”

Youssef el-HELOU

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) honored on June 11, 2013, outgoing Ambassador of Mexico to Lebanon, H.E. Jorge Álvarez Fuentes, with an “Achievement Award” for his staunch support of the Center, during his tenure in Lebanon (2007-2013). The tribute also served as a farewell to Fuentes given that he has recently been appointed Ambassador of Mexico to Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Sudan.

Fuentes has been a career diplomat since 1987, and before becoming Ambassador of Mexico to Lebanon, he previously served as Ambassador of Mexico New Zealand from 1999-2004.

In attendance were: Ambassador Fuentes; Jorge Malcom Baker, the President of the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the Mexican Embassy; Fr. Walid Moussa, President of NDU; Dr. Assaad Eid Vice-President for Sponsored Research and Development; Mr. Souhail Matar, Vice-President for Cultural Affairs and Public Relations; Mr. Roberto Khatlab, the LERC Liaison Officer to Latin America; Faculty deans, directors, staff members, and guests.

Dr. Hourani welcomed the audience and expressed her appreciation of Ambassador Fuentes’s efforts and his significant contributions to Lebanon, during his inspiring tenure. Dr. Hourani also thanked him for deepening relations between the LERC and the several hundred thousand Mexicans of Lebanese descent.

Dr. Eid in his speech said, “ It is both a pleasure and a privilege to stand here today and introduce a distinguished guest who is not an ordinary man but an accomplished academic and diplomat. Ambassador Alvarez has more than three decades of academic and diplomatic experience...

“While remaining a committed, global academic, Ambassador Alvarez has distinguished himself as an outstanding diplomat... Ambassador Alvarez’ passion to bridge Lebanese universities, specially NDU with Mexican universities and the Lebanese expatriates in Mexico is more than visible. His collaboration with the LERC has yielded quite valuable and rewarding results.

“For all of this we say ‘thank you.’ Today’s acknowledgement is but a token of our appreciation and gratitude, and we look forward to continuous cooperation with His Excellency wherever he may be. For us, it is not a ‘farewell’ but a ‘goodbye’, and until we meet again, we wish him the best in his new endeavor.”



(from left): Fr. Walid Moussa, Ambassador Jorge Alvarez Fuentes, Mr. Suheil Matar, Dr. Assaad Eid ,and Dr. Guita Hourani.

For his part, Fr. Moussa commended the efforts of Ambassador Fuentes in helping to establish the Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum at NDU. Fr Moussa said, “Ambassador Fuentes has shown a great degree of interest in our academic affairs, and has always been one of our strongest supporters; therefore, NDU, as an academic institution, is proud to honor him here today.”

Dr. Hourani, Dr. Eid, and Mr. Matar joined Fr. Moussa in presenting Ambassador Fuentes with an “Achievement Award.”

Ambassador Fuentes then took the lectern and thanked NDU and the LERC. He said that the LERC was a treasure for Lebanese migration and a center of which to be proud. He added that he was always happy to attend cultural events and seminars as well as academic activities organized by the Center and considered them a great benefit. Ambassador Fuentes said that his horizons expanded through the Center’s research and accomplishments.

He hailed the role of Lebanese-Mexicans living and working in Mexico and stressed that their efforts and constructive integration in Mexican society helped build the Mexican economy. He also indicated that the Lebanese contribute 12 percent of his country's GDP. He continued by saying that "one of the most important indicators of the Lebanese success in Mexico is the presence of six ministers of Lebanese descent currently serving in the Mexican cabinet."

The Ambassador closed his speech by putting forward a few recommendations to help the Center. He said future studies should shed light on the new generation of Lebanese in Mexico, because they care about Lebanon much more than their parents and grandparents, and are aware of the situation due to increase in the use of social media.

He promised to continue supporting the LERC in its endeavors and presented an invaluable gift to the Museum: a digital copy of the immigrant's magazine *El-Gherbal*.