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Environmental Challenges of 2025

The beginning of President Claudia Sheinbaum's six-year term poses important challenges in the environmental management of our country. Attention to these issues requires a strong and urgent political commitment to ensure sustainability. I share in this installment 5 of the main environmental challenges for this year.

Water

Sustainable development is a priority objective for Mexico, which faces numerous environmental challenges that require immediate attention and comprehensive solutions. Among the priorities, the need to enact a General Water Law with a human rights approach stands out. This legislation, which is more than 11 years overdue (the mandate underlying the constitutional reform to the eighth paragraph of Article 4 of the CPEUM), must recognize water as an essential good for people and communities, guaranteeing its access and sustainable management. However, from our perspective, the enactment of the law should be limited to improving precisely the availability and sanitation for urban public use, in a complementary manner to the provisions of the National Water Law. In other words, the latter should not be abrogated.

Biodiversity

On the other hand, biodiversity conservation faces critical challenges. The 233 Natural Protected Areas (NPAs) under federal jurisdiction require an adequate budget to preserve water resources, ecosystems, and wildlife. Currently, CONANP operates with barely a third of the budget allocated in 2018, which severely limits its management capacity.

Hand in hand with the above, in terms of international commitments, it is vital to comply with the 30X30 target established at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which seeks to conserve 30% of marine lands and waters by 2030. This will contribute to halting biodiversity loss and improving the quality of life of communities. It is also essential to adopt a cross-cutting approach in public policies to triple the use of renewable energies and double energy efficiency by 2030, thus mitigating the effects of climate change.

Circular Economy

The country requires a Circular Economy Law with national scope that promotes a sustainable development model and efficient resource management. The opinion of the General Law of Circular Economy was approved on November 19, 2022 by the Chamber of Deputies. After its approval in said chamber, the bill was sent to the Senate for review and possible ratification. Although the law seeks to promote a more sustainable economic model, based on reuse, recycling and waste reduction, its approach is still insufficient to address the country's serious environmental problems. One of the main points is that the law lacks concrete mechanisms to encourage the active participation of the private sector and to guarantee the effective integration of the circular economy in all productive sectors. In addition, the lack of an adequate recycling and waste treatment infrastructure makes it difficult to achieve the proposed goals without a real commitment on the part of the authorities and companies.

Another aspect that raises doubts is the absence of clear sanctions and a robust monitoring system to assess compliance with the provisions of the law. Without effective oversight, the legislation

could become just another tool with no real impact, rather than a real driver for the transformation to a greener economy.

Green Taxes

In Mexico, the implementation of green taxes has generated intense debate, especially because of their collection rather than preventive or corrective approach. Although these taxes are presented as tools to combat pollution and promote sustainable development, in practice, the quantification of emissions in tons of CO₂ equivalent and their correspondence with units of measurement and updating seem to be more oriented to generate income for the State than to effectively discourage polluting activities.

Recently, such taxes have come into effect in Mexico City and San Luis Potosi, while the state of Colima is about to publish a similar reform in the near future. While the intention to tax polluting emissions is laudable, the fact that these resources are not used directly and specifically for ecological restoration or pollution mitigation projects underscores one of the main flaws of these instruments.

Wildlife Management

Another crucial aspect is to curb illegal deforestation and wildlife trafficking by complying with NOM 059 and the CITES convention. These actions are necessary to protect flora and fauna species and prevent the deterioration of ecosystems. One of the main challenges is the lack of resources and personnel to adequately monitor species and apply conservation measures. In addition, limited coordination between federal, state and local authorities undermines conservation efforts. We are optimistic that a renewal in the main environmental agencies of the federal public administration is underway. We hope that these changes will have an effect in the short and medium term, along the lines described here.

These challenges demand immediate attention and political commitment. The strengthening of the legal framework and the adequate allocation of resources will be key to move towards a sustainable and resilient future for Mexico.

In the environmental area of ECIJA Mexico, we are at your disposal to answer any questions or comments on these and other sustainability issues.