

Dr. Erick Mata Selected as Executive Director of Encyclopedia of Life

Distinguished Costa Rican bioinformatics and education expert to lead expansion of biodiversity project

Washington, DC, November 3, 2010 – Dr. Cristián Samper, Acting Executive Director of the Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) and Director of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History, announced today that Dr. Erick Mata, currently the Director of Biodiversity Informatics and Education at INBio, the National Biodiversity Institute of Costa Rica, has been selected to assume the position of Executive Director of the Encyclopedia of Life. Dr. Jim Edwards, who previously held the position, retired on May 30, 2010 and now serves as a Senior Advisor to EOL.

Samper commented, "Erick Mata is an extraordinary leader who is very well qualified to move the Encyclopedia of Life forward. He succeeds Jim Edwards who has done so much to make our project the success it is today. As EOL transitions from its start-up phase to become a global endeavor, we will be pleased to have an individual with a truly international outlook as its new leader."

"Erick will bring a wealth of knowledge, expertise and a unique perspective to the work of making EOL an essential ingredient of biodiversity programs and learning," said Graham Higley, chairman of the EOL Steering Committee. "EOL's mission to gather and share knowledge of biodiversity through collaborations with content partners, scientific experts and the public will be well-served by Erick's leadership."

"I am thrilled to take on this role," said Dr. Mata. "The Encyclopedia of Life has achieved a great deal in the three years since its inception. The project has an outstanding staff, and a future filled with promise. The time to reach out to people all over the world and invite them to participate in the work of EOL is now, and I look forward to being part of that important effort."

Dr. Mata, 52, was born and raised in Costa Rica. He graduated with a B.Sc. and a Licenciante in computer science from the University of Costa Rica. He received a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in computer science at the University of Oregon. His research interests include biodiversity informatics, cybertaxonomy, and generating and delivering multimedia biodiversity information and knowledge to the general public. Dr. Mata also holds an Associate Professor position in the Computer Science Department at the Costa Rica Institute of Technology.

Dr. Mata served as the chair of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility's (GBIF) Outreach and Capacity Building Scientific Subcommittee from 2001 to 2005 and as the chair of GBIF's Science Committee from 2007 to 2009. He has worked as the Coordinator of the Inter American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) Species and Specimen Thematic Network from 2006 to the present. Dr. Mata also served as INBio's representative to the EOL Institutional Council.

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About the Encyclopedia of Life: The Encyclopedia of Life operates as an ongoing collaboration among its cornerstone institutions and international partners, with the common goal to gather and share knowledge about all forms of life. It aims to provide freely accessible information for users around the world about all of the 1.9 million known species on our planet. Please visit www.eol.org for more information.