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## MEET THE BOARD

# Roberto Hernández Ramírez



**LENGTH OF SERVICE:** Five years

**BACKGROUND:** Chairman of Banco Nacional de Mexico, one of the largest banks in that country and part of the largest financial group in Latin America. Helped build the Mexican stock exchange and served as its president from 1974 to 1979. Sits on nearly a dozen corporate and nonprofit boards, including Citigroup, World Monuments Fund, the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University and the New York Federal Reserve Bank. Avid world traveler and restorer of historical sites. Advocate for natural-resource conservation, education and Mexican culture.

**Family:** Wife Claudia, three grown daughters and eight grandchildren.

**Lives in:** Mexico City.

**Growing up in the rainforest:** I grew up on a family ranch in the state of Veracruz, and I remember thinking of it as a kind of paradise. It was filled with trees and plants and surrounded by two rivers. I saw the devastating effect of the construction of a nearby utility plant and oil-production facilities. That gave me a clear picture—a terrible picture—of the consequences of what we had done to the environment.

**Environmental awareness in Mexico:** Mexico is one of the richest countries of the world in biodiversity. Our environment, however, has been greatly damaged by industrialization. We finally are waking up. The environmental movement is gaining power and ground.

**Finding money for conservation:** In so many countries there is a belief that environmental protection should be a government duty. As a friend of mine said, "Philanthropy is just not in the DNA of people." But I think this is not right. We need to reshape public opinion. It all begins in hearts and minds.

**A two-year sabbatical in London, Rome, Tokyo and Beijing:** Claudia and I chose two cities in Europe and two in the Far East; two cities that look outward and two that look inward. We wanted to understand how these great places could be so different. It was amazing. China, with its tremendous natural wealth, for many years had the philosophy of unlimited resources. Now it is starting to understand that everything is in short supply. I have to confess, this makes me optimistic about the future.