**CRÓNICA CEREMONIA DE APERTURA**

**IBC2024 takes off**

Thousands of botanists attended yesterday evening to the 20th IBC opening ceremony. The event included a welcoming address and discourse by Mr. Juan Carlos Moreno Saiz, president of the Spanish Botanical Society (SEBOT), followed by speeches from Mr. Patrick S. Herendeen, Chair of the International Association of Botanical and Mycological Societies (IABMS), Mrs. María-Paz Martín Esteban, director of the Royal Botanic Garden of Madrid, and Gonzalo Nieto Feliner, president of the organizing committee.

Following the welcome addresses, attendees were treated to a Spanish dance performance by the Iberian Dance Company and a welcome cocktail.

**Madrid welcomes world’s botanists**

The 20th edition of the International Botanical Congress has officially begun. Over the course of this week, nearly 3,000 botanists from all around the globe will engage in discussions on botany and mycology, covering six main topics ranging from biodiversity and conservation to ecology and plants and society.

The institutional event took place yesterday evening featuring a welcoming address by Juan Carlos Moreno Saiz, president of the Spanish Botanical Society (SEBOT). He greeted everyone present, with special acknowledgments to the authorities and representatives of the sponsoring entities. Following this, Patrick S. Herendeen, Chair of the International Association of Botanical and Mycological Societies (IABMS), thanked the Spanish Organizing Committee for their dedication to organizing this IBC edition.

Subsequently, María-Paz Martín Esteban, director of the Royal Botanic Garden of Madrid, emphasized the importance of supporting research students and researchers “since it contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and strengthens networks of scientists”. She also emphasized that “the list of invited speakers represents the diversity of the global scientific community in a number of ways”.

Gonzalo Nieto Feliner, President of the Organizing Committee, noted that while plants have become increasingly valued by citizens in recent years, there remains “a strong responsibility to communicate our science to society at large”. He also underlined the benefits of these in-person events for “networking, face-to-face discussion, and learning from interactive conversation”, that cannot be done online.

To close this institutional event, Juan Carlos Moreno talked about the Spanish botanical history, such as the American expeditions in the 18th century and the work of Spanish botanists as Mutis, to the recent creation of the National Botanical Society in 2019 and highlighted the opportunity that this IBC mean “to work together to promote awareness of respect for nature and engage young botanists”.

To conclude the event, attendees enjoyed a delightful Spanish dance performance titled *"Celebration"*, presented by the Iberian Dance Company. The show was composed by six emblematic choreographies with early dances recreation and stylized Spanish dance. This was followed by a welcome cocktail reception where guests had the opportunity to savor a selection of national products and a touch of international cuisine.