

France awards Légion d'Honneur to HELIO's Dr. Hélène Connor

Paris, France. January 3, 2012. - French President Nicolas Sarkozy has named Dr. Hélène Connor, founder and chairman of HELIO International, a recipient of the 2012 Légion d'Honneur in recognition of her four decades of visionary work in promoting environmental protection, sustainable energy and participatory governance.

Dr. Connor, a French economist who received her doctorate from McGill University in 1986, will enter the honour academy with the grade of "Chevalier." Currently, as chairman of HELIO International, a non-profit organisation, she leads an international network of independent energy experts that promote ecodevelopment via the implementation of sustainable energy policies.

"Energy is the cornerstone of all development. For HELIO International, no work is more vital than ensuring that everyone has access to clean, safe, affordable energy," said Dr. Connor upon hearing about the award. "I share this award with all those who work tirelessly to secure a good quality of life for all."

Prior to launching HELIO International, Dr. Connor led work on energy and the environment at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development within the Environment Directorate. In 1996, she co-founded Réseau Action Climat-France, a network of more than 20 French organisations, including national branches of Greenpeace, Oxfam and the World Wildlife Fund, that works collectively on national climate issues.

Dr. Connor started her career in Canada raising awareness of environmental and sustainable energy issues, including hydroelectric development, nuclear power, and the rights of native communities. In 1970, she created the first francophone environmental, non-governmental organisation in North America, the Société pour vaincre la pollution. In 1971 Dr. Connor started the James Bay Coalition and co-founded the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility in 1975. She also served as a member of Canada's first National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and as vice-chair of the Canadian Environmental Advisory Committee. In 1990, she was named Québec Woman of the Year for the Environment at the Salon national de la femme.

Dr. Connor is married to Canadian army retiree Major Lajambe, a veteran of World War II and of the Korean War.

France's oldest and highest distinction, the Légion d'Honneur was created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 and is awarded to outstanding individuals who have contributed to France and to the ideals it upholds. Past recipients include environmentalist Dr. Jane Goodall, as well as oceanographer and environmentalist Jacques Cousteau and Dr. Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement.

HELIO International is a non-profit think-tank. The organisation is composed of a network of energy analysts who identify, assess, measure and publicise the contribution of energy systems and policies to ecodevelopment (sustainable and equitable development). For more information: www.helio-international.org.

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