

# people

Following the historic U.S. election on 4 November, all eyes are on President-elect **BARACK OBAMA** to see what change he will bring when he takes office in January. News of Senator Obama's victory



brought congratulations from a variety of environmentalists and leaders around the world. Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, which is tasked with working towards an inclusive, comprehensive and ratifiable deal at the crucial climate talks scheduled for December 2009, said he was "very encouraged" by Barack Obama's stance on global warming. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the world has to work more closely together on the environment to create a "New Green Deal" after Obama's election victory, while Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper said he hoped to work with the President-elect on a North American deal for curbing greenhouse gas emissions linked to global warming. According to his campaign statements, the incoming President will radically depart from current U.S. climate and energy policies to create a green energy economy and "make the U.S. a leader on climate change". Proposals include setting a goal of reducing U.S. emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80 per cent by 2050, using a cap-and-trade system. Nor would he wait for emerging industrial giants such as China and India to act, though he may insist they must not be far behind in making their own binding commitments. Other proposals include a 10-year clean energy programme

worth 150 billion dollars—including a target of 10 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2012, and 25 per cent by 2025 – which is envisaged to create 5 million new jobs.

Another landmark election on the other side of the globe saw **MOHAMED NASHEED** attain the presidency of the Maldives. Among his first pronouncements was the intention to establish a "sovereign wealth fund" from tourist income to buy land so the 300,000 inhabitants of the 1,200 islands and coral atolls that form the Maldives can find new homes in the face of rising sea levels. "We do not want to leave the Maldives, but we also do not want to be climate refugees living in tents for decades,"



he said. "We can do nothing to stop climate change on our own and so we have to buy land elsewhere. It's an insurance policy for the worst possible outcome." With most of the Maldives no more than 1.5 metres above sea level, that outcome is a distinct possibility. Potential sites under discussion for relocation include India and Sri Lanka, which have similar cultures, cuisines and climates, or Australia.

The Afghan province of Bamiyan achieved global name recognition in 2001 when two World Heritage-listed Buddhist sculptures hewn from a sandstone cliff face were destroyed by the Taliban government. Seven years on, the province is set to mark a more positive note with the establishment



of the country's first national park, Band-e Amir, which encompasses five spectacular lakes in the Hindu Kush. Leading the initiative to protect the country's fragile natural resources and create environmental awareness is Afghanistan's first female governor, **HABIBA SARABI**, appointed by President Hamid Karzai in 2005. Having previously served as Minister of Women's Affairs and Minister of Culture and Education, Sarabi hopes that tourism can help boost the development of one of Afghanistan's poorest provinces.

To call **T. BOONE PICKENS** bold would be an understatement. The billionaire oil tycoon-turned-environmentalist has made waves in the U.S. by announcing that he will invest his substantial oil fortune in wind power. "Don't get the idea that I've turned green. My business is making money and I



think this is going to make a lot of money," he declared. Pickens recently ordered 667 turbines from General Electric, the first batch

of more than 2,000 he plans for the world's biggest wind farm in Texas. When complete, the \$10 billion project should produce 4,000 megawatts of power — about the same as a coal-fired power station that would provides 7 per cent of the electricity demand of a country such as the U.K. During the U.S. election campaign, Pickens tabled a plan which calls for America to produce 20 per cent of its electricity from renewables, switch its auto fleet to natural gas and expand offshore drilling. "I've been an oil man all my life, but this is one emergency we can't drill our way out of," says the ever-quotable Oklahoman.

American activist **ANNIE LEONARD** is a passionate campaigner against the absurdity of waste. In 2007, more than 3 million people around the world watched her viral documentary 'The Story of Stuff', which documents the life-cycle of our



products. With humour and clarity, the film explains where all our stuff comes from, what resources are used to create it, whose lives are affected during its production, and what happens to it when we discard it. Leonard has spent the last 20 years raising awareness of environmental health and justice issues — she is the coordinator of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, serves on the boards of the International Forum for Globalization and the Environmental Health Fund, and has previously worked for Greenpeace International.