

people

A quarter of a million trees are being planted across Kurdistan for the Billion Tree Campaign thanks to **SAADIYAH HASSOON**, a chemical engineer and environmentalist from Iraq. The former



head of the environmental protection department in Iraq's ministry of industry, Hassoon went on to found the NGO 'Together to protect humans and the environment' which organized the planting of more than 6,000 trees in schools and orphanages in Baghdad. Her current project — with the motto 'Planting trees is a symbol of peace' — took on a new level of ambition when the Kurdish agriculture ministry agreed to provide 250,000 seedlings. The Kurdish ministries of environment, education and defence are also contributing to the project's costs and logistics, as are Greenpeace, the Kirkuk union for agriculture and local newspaper Aljabah Aljadeed. While Iraq's political situation is still unstable, this campaign's impressive momentum can be seen as a sign that tree planting can be the seed of peace and cooperation even in the most conflict-ridden corners of the world.

Bahamian **DON COOPER** has been named



the new Executive Secretary of the Stockholm Convention and Co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention. Having participated in negotiations of international agreements since the early 1980s for the Government of Bahamas, Cooper has most recently been a Council member for the Caribbean Constituency with the Global Environment Facility. He was also a member of the Bureau for the 23rd session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Cooper is an experienced leader and manager who has demonstrated determination and ability to place the environment at the top of the agenda in the Caribbean and beyond. He took up his new position with the Stockholm and Rotterdam Secretariats on 1 November.

On 12 October, **RAJENDRA PACHAURI**, the chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, found out that



his organization had been awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize along with former US Vice-President Al Gore. "I can't believe it. I'm overwhelmed," he said. "It is really the scientific community that contributes to the work of the IPCC and the governments who support the work of the IPCC who are really the winners of this award." The prize was awarded "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change". Under Pachauri's watch, the world's top authority on global warming has issued a series of increasingly grim reports on the state of the planet, helping to put climate change at the heart of the public

debate. When it announced the prize, the Nobel committee commended the IPCC for creating "an ever-broader informed consensus about the connection between human activities and global warming". Pachauri is also the founding director of the Energy and Resources Institute, a leading environmental think-tank in India.

LEONARDO DICAPRIO is the latest prominent Hollywood star to have joined the environmental fray. Echoing the



concern raised in Al Gore's 'Inconvenient Truth', his film 'The 11th Hour' documents the grave problems facing the environment, from global warming to deforestation and species extinction. The documentary, written, produced and narrated by DiCaprio, calls for people to reshape global human activity through technology, conservation and social responsibility. It features dozens of prominent thinkers and environmentalists from around the world including Stephen Hawking, Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai and UNEP Champions of the Earth Mikhail Gorbachev and Sheila Watt-Cloutier.

TOMMY REMENGESAU JR, the President of Palau, has devised a bold environmental programme to preserve his Pacific island from encroaching climate change: his government has set aside 20 per cent of the country's land area and 30 per cent of the ocean close to its shore for conservation. Remengesau says the Pacific islands are already experiencing global warming — with coral bleaching, rising sea levels and drought — and is calling for islands across the region to join the fight.



"It is simply time. Time for each Pacific leader to make conservation a priority," he told 20 island leaders at a Pacific Island Conference of Leaders in May. Several of Palau's neighbours, including the Marshall Islands and Micronesia, have already adopted the programme.

Chilean President **MICHELLE BACHELET** recently accompanied UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on a trip to a Chilean research base in Antarctica in order to



observe the effects of global warming first hand — a trip which prompted Ban to make a strong call for action against climate change. As well as being one of the first women leading a major Latin American country, Bachelet brings a heightened awareness of environmental and social issues. She has put poverty high on her agenda, and she signed ten commitments with renowned Chilean eco-leaders as part of her presidential campaign. In September, at the UN's high-level meeting on climate change, Bachelet likened our planet to an island in the universe. "We can destroy it," she told the 80 heads of states at the meeting, "or save it."