Press Release
International Polar Foundation

Brussels, Belgium
November 3, 2010

Science Trumps Politics in Antarctica

After a long winter, the Princess Elisabeth Station in Antarctica is once again opening for the polar season and hosting BELARE 2010/11

Belgium may be facing a political crisis, but while Flemish and Walloon politicians are still struggling to form a government, Antarctic operations crew and Belgian scientists from all parts of the country are getting ready to leave together for the BELARE 2010-11 season (Belgian Antarctic Research Expedition).

The operational and scientific teams, led by International Polar Foundation founder and Belgian Polar Secretariat President Alain Hubert, will be travelling to the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica (PEA) Station in November and will spend four months on the continent, conducting valuable research across many different scientific fields.

Now in its third scientific season, the PEA Station, built as the world's first zero emissions research station, is fast becoming a new model of Belgian, and global, cooperation. The Belgian Polar Secretariat was formed as a unique public and private partnership following the donation of the station to the Belgian state in April this year, and leads the way in guiding Belgium's continued presence in Antarctica.

"The science which we are now facilitating, and the multiple research streams that now have a home in Antarctica because of the specific location of the Princess Elisabeth Station allow us to feed into the wider climate change debate and give a working base to scientists from Belgium, but also from Europe and the world too," said Belgian Polar Secretariat President Alain Hubert.

The whole operational management of the station in handled by the International Polar Foundation, who ensures that the PEA's groundbreaking sustainable technology continues to provide a secure environment for the scientists who travel to Antarctica every year.

"Our scientists this year include meteorologists, glaciologists and biologists – all continuing research from previous years at the station and all part of the PEA family," Mr. Hubert continued.

Also noteworthy this Antarctic season is the continued use of the PEA's autonomous micro smart grid, the innovative energy-management system which balances energy offer and demand in an effort to maximize energy efficiency, and optimize energy use at the station.

"The smart grid, developed in collaboration with partners GDF Suez (Laborelec) and Schneider Electric, allows the station to run on one third of the installed power of commonly accepted standards, while relying solely on renewable wind and solar energy. We will be making further upgrades this season, and are now well on our way to a first entirely "zero emission" season," said Alain Hubert.

The core team will be leaving Belgium starting November 5th, with scientists travelling to the station via Cape Town, South Africa throughout the coming weeks.

For interviews with Alain Hubert and other members of the team (listed below) please contact: Ben Huyge or Joe Cheek at +32 2 543 0698, or send a mail to press@antarcticstation.org to arrange.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

The scientific projects returning to the Princess Elisabeth Station in Utsteinen, Antarctica this year include the SAMBA, BELLISSIMA, BELDIVA, BELATMOS, HYDRANT and LGGE projects, as described below. Or visit www.antarcticstation.org

The teams to head south for the 2010-2011 season are the following:

BELATMOS

Project: The Belgian BELATMOS project sets out to carry out observations on the composition and chemistry of the atmosphere at the Princess Elisabeth Station. In particular, the aim is to monitor ozone and related trace gases, UV radiation and aerosol particles.

Participant: Alexander Mangold (OMA).

BELDIVA

Project: The BELDIVA project aims to explore the microbial diversity within a 200 km radius around the Station and observe possible future changes in their diversity due to ecosystem change and human impacts.

Participant: Zorigto Namsaraev (Université de Liège).

BELLISSIMA

Project: This glaciology project aims at analyzing ice shelf and ice sheet movements and dynamics in Antarctica in order to improve scientific models. The Antarctic Ice Sheets is the biggest ice mass of our planet and it could have a big impact on sea level rise.

Participants: Thierry Boereboom (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Marie Dierckx (Université Libre de Bruxelles), Bryn Hubbard (Univeristé Libre de Bruxelles), Kenichi Matsuoka (University of Washington), Frank Pattyn (Université Libre de Bruxelles), and Jean-Louis Tison (Université Libre de Bruxelles).

HYDRANT

Project: HYDRANT (HYDRologic system of ANTarctica) aims to investigate the atmospheric part of the Antarctic hydrologic cycle from moisture evaporation and cloud formation to snowfall.

Participant: Stefan Kneifel (Universität Köln).

LGGE

Project: This project is among the international science collaborations at the Princess Elisabeth Station. For the purpose of this project, and in collaboration with the Laboratoire de Glaciologie et Géophysique de l'Environnement (LGGE), Alain Hubert had installed beacons between the station - located about 200 km inland - and the coast. Last year, the data was gathered to determine snow accumulation and ice sheet movements.

Participants: Alain Hubert, Nighat Amin, Rene Robert (International Polar Foundation), Laboratoire de Glaciologie et Géophysique de l'Environnement (LGGE).

SAMBA/MICROMETA

Project: The SAMBA project is the Belgian contribution to the Search for Antarctic Meteorites. The program is an initiative of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the Université Libre de Bruxelles in collaboration with the Japanese Institute of Polar Research in Tokyo and is supported by the Belgian Science Policy (BELSPO) and the International Polar Foundation (IPF).

Participants: Vinciane Debaille (Université Libre de Bruxelles), and Steven Goderis (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and Laureate of the 2010 InBev-Baillet Latour Award).

For more information, please consult the following websites:

www.antarcticstation.org
www.polarfoundation.org

BACKGROUND on the IPF:

The **International Polar Foundation** is a public utility foundation, which aims to promote polar research as a tool for raising public awareness and fostering understanding of the fundamental mechanics of our climate.

The IPF also encourages the adoption of innovative solutions that will enable us to respond in a sustainable manner to the challenges associated with climate change.