

## THE POLAR SECRETARIAT

In November 2008 Frank Pattyn from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) will arrive with the first scientific expedition at the Princess Elisabeth Station to begin glaciology research.

Once operational, Princess Elisabeth Station will be maintained by the Belgian government, and the scientific programme will be run by the Belgian Federal Science Policy (BELSPO). A Polar Secretariat for the operational management of the station is currently being established. The Belgian Council of Ministers has signed a protocol of partnership between the Belgian Federal Science Policy (BELSPO) and IPF, which will serve as a basis of cooperation between IPF and BELSPO for future use of the base and the scientific research that will be carried out there.

The agreement stipulates that the new Secretariat be an independently managed government service. The

Secretariat will be made up of a council and placed under the supervision of a director. The council will have ten representatives, five from the private sector and five from the public sector. The five private sector representatives will be designated by IPF, while the five from the public sector will include two representatives from BELSPO as well as one representative each from the Belgian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environment, and Defence.

Aside from managing the base, the Polar Secretariat will also be responsible for the diffusion of any relevant information gained from the research that will be carried out there, especially information that helps us gain a better understanding of the Antarctic and climate change.

Legislation will be drafted by the new Belgian Government and voted in the Parliament to make the secretariat operational.