

## BEYOND THE ANTARCTIC TREATY

Since its coming into effect in 1961, Antarctica's uniquely pristine environment and ecosystem has been preserved and protected under the aegis of the Antarctic Treaty, allowing only peaceful activities such as scientific research to take place on the continent. Since 1998, the Protocol on Environmental protection has also banned all mining activities. Currently divided into six annexes, the Protocol details specific measures and procedures relating to the assessment of activities and whether they have minor or transitory impacts on the environment; the conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora; waste disposal and management; the prevention of marine pollution; the management of specially protected areas; and liability for environmental emergencies.

On presenting the Princess Elisabeth station project and Environmental Evaluations Report (CEE) to the Antarctic Treaty to the Committee of Environmental Protection at the Antarctic Treaty meeting in 2006 in Edinburgh, however, Johan Berte, the IPF's station Project Manager, made it clear that the station design, whilst meeting all of the strict

requirements of the Protocol for Environmental Protection, would also address and provide solutions to global sustainability and energy production issues that stretch far beyond the purely Antarctic context by limiting the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as a whole.

At a time when the climate change debate is rapidly moving toward the search for solutions, the result of this outlook and ambition will be the construction of the first ever research station in Antarctic history that will not only meet all the measures and procedures of the Protocol on Environmental protection to the Antarctic Treaty, but go well beyond them, as there are no stipulations in the treaty regarding carbon emissions, and to prove that a habitable structure can be designed to operate on 100% renewable energy, even in one of the harshest and coldest environments on Earth. The Princess Elisabeth Station will push the boundaries of clean energy production and provide an example of pioneering sustainable development solutions to a world in urgent need of reducing its dependence on fossil fuels.