LAUNCHING THE LAST PHASE OF THE PRINCESS ELISABETH STATION PROJECT



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On Thursday October 16th, the International Polar Foundation (IPF) held its last major press conference before the end of the construction phase of the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica station project (full press pack available on the Princess Elisabeth Station website). Before the scaled mock-up of the station's technical core which was built on the Laborelec site (research centre of GDF SUEZ Group), the speakers introduced the objectives set for the BELARE 2008-09 mission and the first science expeditions to start as soon as November 2008.

In collaboration with the station's partners Electrabel, from GDF SUEZ Group, and Schneider Electric, the IPF revealed the technical core of the station and the elements making it the first "zero emission" research station. The next big step is the loading of the estimated 42 containers aboard the ice-class cargo ship MSCO Ivan Papanin and the shipment to Antarctica. The ship is due to leave the port of Antwerp on November

14th.

In her introductory speech, Mrs Sabine Laruelle, Belgian Federal Science Policy Minister, reiterated the importance of this project for the Belgian federal authorities (Mrs Sabine Laruelle's full speech is available on the Princess elisabeth Station website). She also underlined how capital the station's science program is for the Belgian Science Policy office. Details on the government's financial participation in this project can be found in the Minister's speech.

The final stage of the construction will end on 15th February 2009 with the official inauguration of the first "zero emission" research station, completed within the framework of the International Polar Year.