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**Media Statement
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BELGIANS VISIT SCOTT BASE

The visit to Scott Base by a Belgian Ministerial delegation will provide scientific opportunities for collaboration between the New Zealand and Belgian Government, especially around marine research and biodiversity work, said Antarctica New Zealand Chief Executive Lou Sanson.

“This is a timely visit because the Belgians are designing their Antarctic base which they hope to have finished in 2007/08 coinciding with International Polar Year.

Belgium has chosen to establish an Antarctic base in 2007 in Donning Maude Land.

The Belgian delegation has been at Scott Base for the last three days looking at how a small country runs their Antarctic programme. In particular they have studied Scott Base’s infrastructure, our staffing levels, policies and procedures.

The Ministerial group comprises Mr Marc Verwilghen (Minister of Science Policy, Belgium); Luk Darras (Ambassador of Belgium); Alain Hubert (International Polar Foundation); Patrick Lamot (Counsellor of Minister Verwilghen); two journalists and a cameraman.

The Minister has looked closely at how Belgium can model their programme on the New Zealand experience. New Zealand operates an integrated whole of Government approach using Defence, Crown Research Institutes and universities.

Alain Hubert from the International Polar Foundation was the first person to ski across the entire continent in 1996.

In addition to visiting Ross Island and Scott Base, members of the delegation also visited Scott and Shackleton’s historic huts.

For further information:

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