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Media Statement

For Immediate Release

Fifty years is just the tip of the iceberg

A one-off conference next week will celebrate 50 years of success in Antarctica and look ahead to an even more successful future.

Antarctica: 50 Years on the Ice – Just the Tip of the Iceberg will be held in Wellington from 3-6 July. It is co-hosted by Antarctica New Zealand and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Chief executive of Antarctica New Zealand Lou Sanson said the conference would build on the momentum that has gathered since January, when the official celebrations of 50 years of New Zealand involvement in Antarctica were held. Prime Minister Helen Clark and Sir Edmund Hillary, who helped establish Scott Base in 1957, travelled to the New Zealand base with several other dignitaries to commemorate the 50th anniversary from 18-22 January.

“While this conference aims to present the many successes of the past – from International Geophysical Year in 1957 to the present day – we also want to emphasise that what has been achieved so far really is just the tip of the iceberg,” Sanson said.

“We can use the past to inspire us to work towards the future in the spirit of International Polar Year (2007-2009). There is still so much to be researched, discovered and protected on the vast white continent we call Antarctica, and that potential is very exciting.”

Sanson said the special significance of the conference had attracted an impressive line-up of national and international speakers. Dr David Carlson, the UK-based director of the International Programme Office for International Polar Year, is a keynote speaker.

“This conference will act as the perfect springboard to kick off International Polar Year activity in New Zealand, following the recent Budget announcement of an \$11.1 million funding package.”

Sanson said the diverse range of Antarctic-related speakers coming from overseas showed how highly-regarded New Zealand’s Antarctic programme is in the international arena.

Other speakers include Professor Peter Barrett (Geologist, Victoria University of Wellington); Dr Laura De Santis (geophysicist, National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics, Italy); Professor Peter Webb (geologist, Ohio State University, US); Dr Clive Howard-Williams (biologist, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, New Zealand); Dr Susan Solomon (atmospheric scientist, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric

Administration, US); Professor Berry Lyons (Byrd Polar Research Center, US); and Dr Diana Wall (biologist, Colorado State University, US).

Five key themes within Antarctic science and policy will dominate the conference: collaborations between New Zealand, USA, Italy and other nations working within the Ross Sea region; future directions and issues; New Zealand innovations; directions and achievements built on the International Geophysical Year; and impacts and influences on the international arena.

Other features of Antarctica: 50 Years on the Ice – Just the Tip of the Iceberg are presentations from artists, media and students who have travelled to Antarctica, film screenings, panel discussions, poster sessions and social functions.

Science Minister Steve Maharey will open the event, while US Ambassador William McCormick and Giuseppe De Rossi, head of the Italian Antarctic Logistics Consortium, will give presentations on their countries' respective Antarctic programmes.

“The fact that these two men have agreed to present at our conference shows the level of co-operation that exists with our two close Antarctic neighbours, and indeed the amicable working relationship and friendship we enjoy with them,” Sanson said.

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Note for editors:

More information on the conference, including a full programme, is available at www.antarcticanz.govt.nz