# NEWS RELEASE

## National Ice Services Warn of Continuing Hazards to Navigation in the Polar Seas

**Washington, DC, October 22, 2010 -** The International Ice Charting Working Group (IICWG) held its 11th meeting hosted by the U.S. National Ice Center.  The IICWG issued the following statement:

"More and more ships are venturing into polar seas drawn by receding sea ice, the lure of resources, shortened transportation routes and the desire to experience these unique regions of the world. The International Ice Charting Working Group warns that sea ice and icebergs continue to present significant hazards to navigation and other maritime activities. It strongly supports the continued development of the International Maritime Organization's Polar Code for improved safety of ship operations. Careful attention to current and forecast ice conditions is essential for marine safety.  The national ice services are working together to ensure that vessels operating in ice encumbered waters have the best ice information possible."
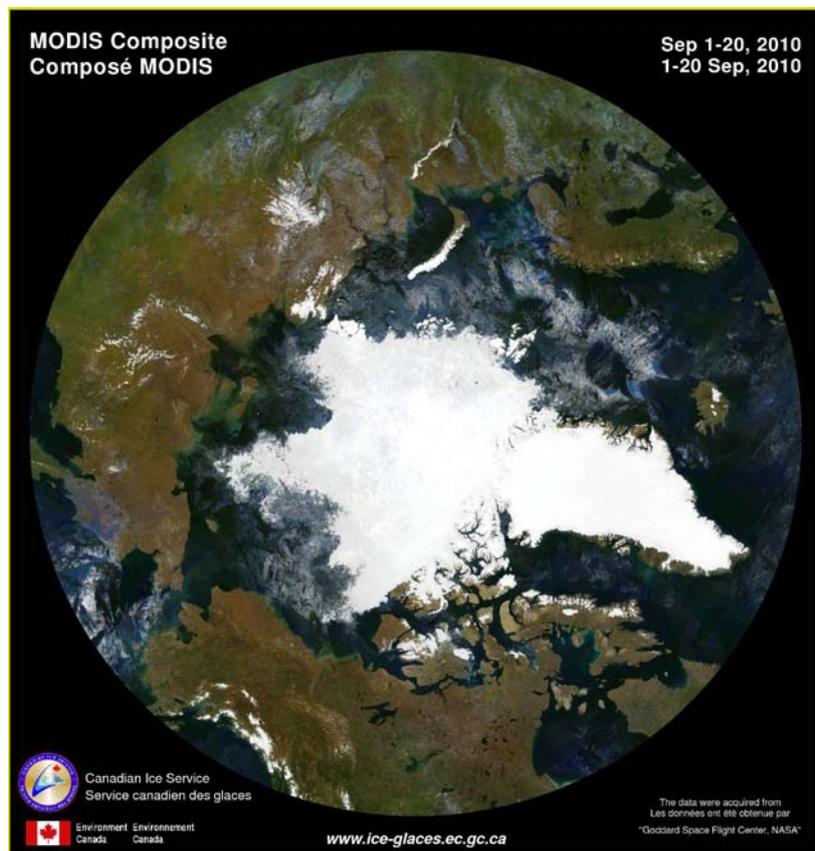
*(Data courtesy NASA; composite produced by Environment Canada - Canadian Ice Service)*

**Highlights of 2010:**

- The sea ice pack in the Arctic Ocean shrank to the 3rd lowest extent on record. The 5 lowest extents in the last 30 years have all occurred since 2004.
- Vessels are increasingly testing the waters of the Arctic.  The summer of 2010 saw several commercial vessels transit Russia's Northern Sea Route including the first high-tonnage tanker.  Vessels made the journey in less time than expected and encountered only isolated ice floes.  Reliable, year-round

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navigation in the western Northern Sea Route was supported by customized ice information. The trend for increased Arctic shipping is expected to continue.

- Even as Arctic ice is diminishing in the overall sense, regional ice conditions will continue to be extremely variable for years to come:
    - o In March, dozens of ships were stuck in the severest ice season in the Baltic Sea since 1996;
    - o The 2010 ice season around southern Greenland was shorter than normal, but with locally heavy ice conditions causing several ships to become beset;
    - o The ice in the Bering Sea was unusually extensive in early 2010;
    - o The sea ice in the Canadian Arctic melted to near record low levels during the summer.
- In August, the Petermann Glacier in northwest Greenland calved a 280 square kilometer ice island, the largest ever recorded in the Arctic. The ice island has since fractured into several fragments that will become hazards to navigation and other maritime activities as they drift southward through Baffin Bay.
- Around Antarctica, the sea ice pack continued its increasing trend with sea ice extent significantly greater than normal.

The IICWG was formed in 1999 to promote cooperation between the world's ice services on all matters concerning sea ice and icebergs and brings together the operational ice services of Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, United States and the International Ice Patrol. These services are charged with monitoring sea ice and icebergs for marine safety.

For more information on the IICWG, see ***http://nsidc.org/noaa/iicwg/***.

For up to date information on Sea Ice Services in the world see:
***http://wdc.aari.ru/wmo/docs/WMO574.pdf***.

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