Background Information for Media: Mobile Satellite Safety Services for GMDSS

Background Information for Media: Mobile Satellite Safety Services for GMDSSBethesda, MD—September 25, 2008—Since the creation of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) more than two decades ago, Inmarsat has been the only mobile satellite provider certified to supply safety communication services. Over the last few years, various proposals have been debated within the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to open the way for other mobile satellite service (MSS) providers to become certified for GMDSS communications. This process was driven largely by ship operators concerned about the lack of competition in the marketplace, and by member states bordering on Arctic waters, which are beyond the footprint of Inmarsat's geostationary satellites. Increasingly, the eyes of the shipping industry are turning toward the Arctic as new sea lanes open in the far north. At the present time, there is no approved satellite service covering GMDSS Region A4 (approximately above 70 degrees latitude); ships operating in those waters must rely on HF radio for GMDSS safety communications.

The IMO Subcommittee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) last year recommended to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) amendments to IMO Assembly Resolution A.888(21) setting forth procedures for evaluating, recognizing and approving other MSS providers for GMDSS.

The MSC, at its 83rd Session in October 2007, accordingly adopted amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention Chapter IV to add new regulations for GMDSS satellite providers. The new regulation provides for the MSC to determine the criteria, procedures and arrangements for the evaluation, recognition, review and oversight of the provision of mobile satellite communication services in the GMDSS. The amendment will come into force July 1, 2009. At the same time, the MSC approved revisions to Resolution A.888(21), "Criteria for the provision of mobile-satellite communication services in the GMDSS," which were referred to the IMO Assembly for adoption.

At the 25th Session of the IMO Assembly in November 2007, the MSC recommendations were approved in Resolution A.1001(25). Resolution A.1001(25) provides that mobile satellite communication systems for use in the GMDSS should fulfill the performance criteria adopted by IMO as contained in the Annex to the resolution, and that oversight of future satellite providers in the GMDSS should be undertaken by the International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO), which currently has oversight responsibility for Inmarsat in the GMDSS.

The Annex to A.1001(25) contains detailed guidelines for mobile satellite systems to become certified for use in the GMDSS. Applications for candidate systems will be presented to the MSC by a member state. The application will be evaluated by the COMSAR subcommittee to ensure that the system conforms to the functional requirements for processing and prioritizing ship-to-shore and shore-to-ship distress and safety messages. The complete mobile satellite network, including Earth stations, will be expected to achieve 99.9 percent availability. The candidate system must also offer sufficient evidence as to its continuity, durability and reliability over an extended period of time. Once these criteria are met, the mobile satellite system will sign a Public Services Agreement with IMSO, and will then be recommended for approval by the MSC on behalf of the IMO.

Recognizing the growing importance of Region A4, a decision was taken at the 12th COMSAR subcommittee session in April 2008 to endorse the expansion of Worldwide Navigational Warnings into Arctic waters and to create a common Maritime Safety Information (MSI) broadcast system for the Arctic region, in accordance with recommendations from the joint IMO/International Hydrographic Organization/World Meteorological Organization Correspondence Group on Arctic MSI services. The subcommittee agreed that, until such time that an Arctic satellite service provider under GMDSS was available, these broadcasts would be made through HF narrowband radio.

Iridium welcomes these IMO decisions, which will introduce an element of competition into the marketplace and also make an important contribution to safety at sea by providing GMDSS satellite coverage for the first time to ships operating in Region A4. Iridium is the only MSS provider with seamless reliable coverage over 100 percent of the Earth's surface, offering a unique value proposition for maritime safety communications. Only Iridium can provide complete universal coverage over all GMDSS Regions, including A4, with a single low-cost shipboard terminal to meet both the voice and data requirements of the GMDSS. Iridium has always provided a valuable service to the A4 region and has made an important

requirements of the GMDSS. Iridium has always provided a valuable service to the A4 region and has made an important contribution to safety in this region for many years.

A similar development has been taking place in the international aviation community, which also has stringent requirements for safety communications with aircraft on long-haul flights. Until recently, only Inmarsat was approved for satellite safety communication services on commercial aircraft engaged in transoceanic flights. Earlier this year, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council approved standards and recommended practices (SARPs) that will permit Iridium to provide Aeronautical Mobile Satellite (Route) Services (AMS®S) for commercial aircraft on long-haul routes, many of which fly over the Polar Regions. The ICAO decision means that member states can now approve Iridium satellite equipment to meet the international requirements for communications on transoceanic flights. The first certification trials are now underway.

Iridium plans to move forward as quickly as possible to achieve full GMDSS compliance and offer GMDSS-compliant ship terminals to the marine market as soon as the SOLAS IV amendments come into force July 1, 2009.

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