

PRESS RELEASE

World's Largest Pipelay Vessel Ready to Lay Nord Stream Pipeline in Gulf of Finland

- **Allseas' Solitaire leaves Rotterdam for the Baltic Sea**
- **Dynamically-positioned vessel will operate without anchors in the congested Gulf of Finland**

Zug, 19 August 2010. Allseas' Solitaire, the world's largest pipelay vessel, left Rotterdam after being retrofitted in preparation to lay a section of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline in the Gulf of Finland. The dynamically-positioned pipelay vessel will be able to carry out precise manoeuvring without anchors, thus ensuring additional safety as it lays the 342.5 kilometre section of the pipeline in this congested part of the Baltic Sea from kilometre point (KP) 7.5 in Russian waters to KP 350 in the Finnish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Before starting its journey to the Baltic Sea, the Solitaire was adapted to Nord Stream requirements in Rotterdam. Each piece of equipment was thoroughly tested in port and will be tested in operational offshore conditions in the Baltic Sea before the vessel starts laying pipe.

For accurate positioning the Solitaire is equipped with ten thrusters with an integrated propulsion power of 50,000 kW. These thrusters keep the pipelay vessel automatically in position. The thrusters are steered by a computer system that constantly monitors the actual position of the vessel in comparison to its target position (in this case the agreed pipeline route). Should there be any deviation, the thrusters instantly propel her back into the target position, so that the vessel is always operating along the precise agreed route. This positioning system enables the Solitaire to safely work even in adverse weather conditions, and it is ideal for pipe-laying operations in the Gulf of Finland, which is one of the most congested areas of the Baltic Sea.

The sections in Russian and Finnish waters adjoining the 342.5 kilometres of pipeline to be laid by the Solitaire are being constructed by Saipem's Castoro Sei pipelay vessel, including the section at the Russian landfall. A third pipelay vessel, Saipem's flat-bottomed Castoro Dieci, is responsible for constructing the pipeline in the shallow waters at and near the German landfall.

Sea trials will ensure that Nord Stream's high level of HSE (health, safety, and environmental) standards are met from day one. The trials will be used to fine-tune the equipment and familiarise the crew with the project-

specific on-board procedures. These trials will be attended by independent inspectors from the certification institute DNV (Det Norske Veritas, Norway) to ensure that the project's high quality standards are met.

At 300 metres long (excluding stinger) by 40.6 metres wide the Swiss-based Allseas Group's Solitaire is the length of three football pitches and is manned and equipped to lay pipe 24 hours a day 7 days a week. She accommodates 420 people and has work stations on several levels to enable her to receive and store the 12 metre long 25-tonne pipes, weld them together, test the welds, join the pipes to the pipeline and lay it on the seabed along the agreed route at a rate of about 2.5 kilometres a day.

When completed in 2012, the Nord Stream Pipeline will be 1,224 kilometres long, and comprise 202,000 concrete weight coated steel pipes. The pipeline will transport 55 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas a year to Europe.

For further information, please contact:

Ulrich Lissek, Communications Director, Mobile: +41 79 874 31 58

Frank Dudley, Media Relations Manager, Mobile: +41 79 536 68 26

Email: press@nord-stream.com

Notes to editors

Nord Stream is a natural gas pipeline that will link Russia and the European Union through the Baltic Sea. The European Union's annual natural gas imports in the year 2007 were approximately 312 billion cubic metres (bcm) and are projected to increase to 516 bcm by the year 2030. This means that by 2030, the EU's annual import needs will have increased by about 200 bcm (Source: IEA, World Energy Outlook, 2009). Nord Stream will meet about 25 percent of this additional gas import requirement by connecting the European gas pipeline network to some of the world's largest gas reserves. The project will be an important contribution to long-term security of supply and a milestone of the energy partnership between the European Union and Russia.

Nord Stream AG plans to have the first of two parallel pipelines operational in 2011. Each line is approximately 1,220 kilometres long, providing a transport capacity of some 27.5 bcm per year. Full capacity of about 55 bcm per year will be reached when the second line goes on stream. This is enough gas to supply more than 26 million European households.

Nord Stream AG is an international joint venture established for the planning, construction and subsequent operation of the new offshore gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea. Russian OAO Gazprom holds a 51 percent stake in the joint venture. The German companies BASF SE/Wintershall Holding GmbH and E.ON Ruhrgas AG hold 15.5 percent each, and the Dutch gas infrastructure company N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie and the French energy company GDF Suez S.A. each hold a 9 percent stake.

Nord Stream is included in the Trans-European Energy Network Guidelines (TEN-E) of the European Union. In 2006, the project was designated a "project of European

interest” by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Nord Stream is, therefore, recognized as a key project for meeting Europe’s energy infrastructure needs.

Construction of the Nord Stream Pipeline started in April 2010, after completion of environmental studies and planning and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) along the entire pipeline route. Three pipelay barges have been commissioned to work on the project: Saipem’s Castoro Sei is carrying out the majority of the construction in the Baltic Sea. The Castoro Dieci is operating in German waters. Allseas’ Solitaire will handle construction in the Gulf of Finland. The first pipeline is scheduled to be operational in 2011, the second one in 2012.