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Air Astana and China Southern Airlines sign Joint Venture Agreement

Almaty, Kazakhstan – Air Astana JSC (the "Company" and, together with its subsidiary FlyArystan, the "Group"), the leading airline group in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions by revenue and fleet size, has signed a joint venture (JV) agreement with China Southern Airlines to strengthen air connectivity between Kazakhstan and China, expand travel opportunities and deliver greater convenience and choice for passengers. The agreement marks the first airline joint venture between the two countries, building on the airlines' established codeshare partnership and creating a platform for deeper commercial cooperation.

Under the agreement, the two airlines will work together to coordinate flight schedules, expand codeshare services and undertake joint marketing initiatives. By bringing their respective networks and commercial frameworks closer together, the partnership aims to make journeys across both airlines more straightforward, with more consistent conditions of travel, smoother transfers and greater access to destinations across Kazakhstan, China and beyond.

"The number of flights between our countries has increased by 52 per cent compared with the same period in 2025 (117 scheduled flights per week across 21 routes). Since the start of 2026, more than one million passengers have been carried. The Ministry plans to further expand the route network with China, increasing it to 30 destinations," said Talgat Lastaev, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

"China is a strategically important market for Air Astana, and Kazakhstan is well positioned as a gateway connecting Europe and Asia. Our joint venture with China Southern Airlines represents an important step in developing this role and deepening our commercial relationship with one of China's leading carriers. By combining our complementary networks and aligning key aspects of our commercial offering, we aim to provide passengers with greater choice, more convenient connections and more consistent conditions and rules across both airlines. At the same time, closer cooperation will enable us to respond more effectively to passenger demand and support the continued growth of air travel between Kazakhstan and China," said Richard Ledger, VP, Partnerships and Alliances of Air Astana.

Zeng Yongchao, EVP of China Southern Airlines stated: "China and Kazakhstan are important partners under the Belt and Road framework. This joint venture is a substantive achievement in aviation connectivity between the two countries and reflects our shared aspiration for a prosperous regional market. For both airlines, this is a strategic choice that leverages our respective strengths and shares resources. For passengers, the most tangible benefit is greater convenience: more flight options, smoother transfer procedures, and a more seamless travel experience. We hope every passenger journeying along the Belt and Road's air routes will feel the difference this cooperation brings."

Air Astana operates flights from Astana and Almaty to Urumqi, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, offering up to 36 weekly regular return flights during the peak season. China Southern Airlines operates flights from Urumqi, Beijing, Guangzhou and Xi'an to Almaty and Astana, offering up to 29 weekly regular return flights during the peak season. Together, the airlines provide an extensive network of services between the two countries, creating a strong foundation for further improvements in connectivity, travel convenience and passenger choice.

The partnership will support the development of business, tourism, education and family travel between the two countries, while strengthening connectivity for passengers connecting onwards through Kazakhstan and China to destinations across the airlines' respective networks.

For more information, please contact:

Investor Relations:	investor.relations@airastana.com
Corporate Communications:	media@airastana.com
Financial Media:	airastana@fticonsulting.com

About Air Astana Group

Air Astana Group is the largest airline group in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions by revenue and fleet size. The Group operates a fleet of 64 aircraft split between Air Astana, its full-service airline that operated its inaugural flight in 2002, and FlyArystan, its low-cost airline established in 2019. The Group provides scheduled, point-to-point and transit, short-haul and long-haul air travel and cargo on domestic, regional and international routes across Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Far East, the Gulf, India and Europe. Air Astana has been recognised by SkyTrax as the Best Airline in Central Asia & CIS fifteen years running and received the Best Airline Staff Service in Central Asia & CIS award ten times in a row. FlyArystan has been recognised as the Best Low-Cost Carrier (LCC) in Central Asia & CIS at the SkyTrax awards four times. Additionally, Air Astana was awarded a five-star rating in the major airline category by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). The Group is listed on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange, Astana International Exchange and London Stock Exchange (ticker symbol: AIRA).

About China Southern Airlines

China Southern Airlines, a commercial airline headquartered in Guangzhou. As of mid-2026, the airline operates a fleet totaling 973 passenger and cargo aircraft. It was the first to be honored with the Three-Star Flight Safety Diamond Award by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) and with the most prestigious Seven-Star Safety Rating by AirlineRatings.com. It has topped the airline service category of the China Brand Power Index for 16 years in a row and has been honored with the CAPSE Best Airline Award for nine consecutive years.