



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MERIDIANA LAUNCHES NEW LOOK AIR ITALY**

**Ambitious business plans aim to take Air Italy to 10 million passengers a year by 2022**

**Air Italy will provide travelers with an innovative, sophisticated and stylish carrier,  
offering an enhanced travel experience**

**New Milan Malpensa – Bangkok route to start September 2018**

**Eight new aircraft, 3 B737 MAX and five A330-200, to join the fleet in 2018**

**New code-share agreement between Qatar Airways and Air Italy**

Milan, 19 February 2018 – Meridiana, Italy's long established privately owned airline, today announced an exciting new phase of growth and development with its new identity as Air Italy.

During a press conference in Milan, Mr. Marco Rigotti, Chairman of Alisarda and AQA Holding; His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Group Chief Executive of Qatar Airways; Mr. Sultan Allana of Alisarda and AKFED and Mr. Francesco Violante, Chairman of Meridiana, unveiled Air Italy's fresh and modern brand identity and presented the new airline business plan, focusing on excellent passenger experience and the next generation of traveller, aimed at positioning itself as Italy's leading airline.

**Air Italy aims to have approximately 50 aircraft by 2022 and is already committed to receiving 20 of the brand new Boeing 737 MAX aircraft type from April 2018, over the next three years. Air Italy will also receive five Airbus A330-200 aircraft this year from the Qatar Airways' fleet, prior to these being further replaced by Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft, commencing May 2019.**

**Network destinations will also enjoy continued expansion, with new long-range routes from Milan to New York and Miami already announced recently, that will soon be followed by new short-haul routes connecting Milan and the airline's long range destinations to Rome, Naples, Palermo, Catania and Lamezia Terme. In September 2018 Air Italy will be launching four weekly flights from Milan to Bangkok. Three additional long-haul destinations will be opened by the end of the year.**



**Further plans also include strengthening the short-range network to improve connectivity and launching the first long-range destination from Rome Fiumicino in 2019. Air Italy aims to fly more than 50 year-round routes by 2022.**

Commenting on the new airline identity and developments, **Chairman of Alisarda, Mr. Marco Rigotti**, said: “Our ambition is strong now as it has been throughout our history, starting with the aim of assisting in the development of tourism in Costa Smeralda and, later, to develop the leisure and charter Italian market place.

“Over the last 10 years Meridiana has witnessed the radical transformation of the European aviation industry, characterised by a fierce competition. Air Italy aims to be a leader in the global industry, thanks to the airline’s hub in Milan Malpensa, and the reinforced base of Rome Fiumicino, alongside the seasonal network from Olbia’s Costa Smeralda heritage base which is also the headquarters of the airline”.

**Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker**, commented: “Qatar Airways is known the world over as the best airline in the world, as voted for in Skytrax 2017. It is with this ambition and dedication to the passenger experience that we will work together to build a sustainable airline alternative for the people of Italy and global travellers to and from this beautiful country”.

“With high quality and an affordable schedule of services in the domestic, regional and intercontinental segments, Air Italy will achieve global scale in both fleet and network expansion, offering high-quality premium class products across all flights on a modern fleet.”

Qatar Airways previously strengthened its commitment to Italy in 2017 with the acquisition of 49 per cent of AQA Holding, the new parent company of Air Italy, while the previous sole shareholder Alisarda kept 51 per cent.

**Meridiana’s Chairman, Francesco Violante**, commented: “Air Italy has an ambition to reach a goal of transporting 10 million passengers per year by 2022 traveling to, from and via Italy. We expect more than 8 million of these to use Milan Malpensa airport. In support of this ambition, there is a great need to develop new skills and competences amongst our people and for all to embrace change as a fantastic opportunity. I wholeheartedly support this new effort.”

Meridiana has carried more than 100 million passengers to date as full-service carrier, operating both short-haul and long-haul flights. The Company has more than 1,400 dedicated employees, maintains codeshare partnerships with other major airlines, and is a full member of IATA and the largest airline at Olbia Costa Smeralda airport.

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#### **About Air Italy:**

Air Italy is an Italian airline fully owned by AQA Holding (51% Alisarda and 49% Qatar Airways), with its headquarters in Olbia. The company was established up with the name of Alisarda on 29 March 1963, with the aim of promoting tourism to Sardinia. In 1991 the name was changed to Meridiana. Following a merger with charter carrier Eurofly and the acquisition of the charter company Air Italy the airline became the most important Italian player in international leisure flights.

In December 2017 growth towards new domestic, medium-haul and long haul destinations from Milan Malpensa was announced reflecting a major strategic shift for the Company.

In February 2018 a new corporate identity was presented and the Company was rebranded as Air Italy.

Beginning from May 2018, Air Italy will add new domestic routes from Milan to Rome, Naples, Palermo, Catania, Lamezia Terme scheduled for connection to its newest long-range destinations including New York, Miami and Bangkok (starting in September 2018). Its network also includes direct international flights from Milan Malpensa to Accra, Cairo, Dakar, Havana, Lagos, Mombasa, Moscow, Zanzibar and, from its Olbia Costa Smeralda hub, year-round scheduled services to Rome, Milan Linate and seasonal ones to a wide range of domestic and regional destinations.

Air Italy's fleet, currently comprising 8 Boeing 737 NG and 3 Boeing 767-300, will be progressively renewed with 8 new aircraft 3 brand new Boeing 737 MAX 8 and 5 Airbus A330-200 joining during 2018 and with the full retirement of the B767-300 by the end of 2018.

#### **About Qatar Airways:**

Qatar Airways, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, is celebrating more than 20 years of Going Places Together with travellers across its more than 150 business and leisure destinations. The world's fastest-growing airline will add a number of exciting new destinations to its growing network in 2018, including Canberra, Australia; Thessaloniki, Greece and Cardiff, UK and many more, flying passengers on board its modern fleet of more than 200 aircraft.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was named 'Airline of the Year' by the 2017 World Airline Awards, managed by international air transport rating organisation Skytrax. It was also named 'World's Best Business Class,' 'Best Airline in the Middle East,' and 'World's Best First Class Airline Lounge.'

Qatar Airways is a member of the **oneworld** global alliance. The award-winning alliance was named the World's Best Airline Alliance 2015 by Skytrax for the third year running. Qatar Airways was the first Gulf carrier to join global airline alliance, **oneworld**, enabling its passengers to benefit from more than 1,000 airports in more than 150 countries, with 14,250 daily departures.

Oryx One, Qatar Airways' in-flight entertainment system offers passengers up to 4,000 entertainment options from the latest blockbuster movies, TV box sets, music, games and much more. Passengers flying on Qatar Airways flights served by its B787, A350, A380, A319 and select A320 and A330 aircraft can also stay in touch with their friends and family around the world by using the award-winning airline's on-board Wi-Fi and GSM service.

Qatar Airways proudly supports a range of exciting international and local initiatives dedicated to enriching the global community that it serves. Qatar Airways, the official FIFA partner, is the official sponsor of many top-level sporting events, including the FIFA 2018 and 2022 World Cups, reflecting the values of sports as a means of bringing people together, something at the core of the airline's own brand message - *Going Places Together*.

Qatar Airways Cargo, the world's third largest international cargo carrier, serves more than 60 exclusive freighter destinations worldwide via its world-class Doha hub and also delivers freight to more than 150 key business and leisure destinations globally with more than 200 aircraft. The Qatar Airways Cargo fleet includes eight Airbus A330 freighters, 13 Boeing 777 freighters and two Boeing 747-8 freighters.