

# Enhancing Direct Air Connectivity to the Maldives

The Maldives relies heavily on tourism, which contributes around 25% of its GDP. In 2023, the country greeted 1.9 million tourists, and the government aims to increase this number with ongoing developments.



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The expansion of Velana International Airport (MLE), along with three other international airports (NMF, HAQ & GAN), will enhance passenger handling capacity. 48% of major tourism source markets remain underserved with no direct connectivity. With 51 Air Service Agreements and Maldives being in a strategic location in the Indian Ocean, the tourist arrivals to the Maldives can be further increased by operating direct flights to tourism source markets.

## Scope

- **Commencement of Long-Haul Operations:** Maldivian, the National Airline of the Maldives aims to start operations of long-haul direct flights utilizing 2 A330-200 aircraft in Q1 2025.
- **Fleet Development:** The introduction of two A330-200 aircraft will launch long-haul routes, providing direct connectivity to key underserved tourism markets. The long-haul expansion strategy requires a phased increase in fleet size to accommodate additional routes, ensuring that Maldivian can serve a growing number of cities and meet rising market demand.
- **Developing VIA as a Transit Hub:** Leveraging the Maldives' strategic geographical position, Velana International Airport (MLE) is poised to become a key transit hub for both passenger and cargo traffic in the region. The ongoing expansion of the airport's passenger and cargo terminals further enhances this potential, enabling Maldivian to tap into transit markets and support sustained growth of its business.

## Developmental Models

Government is exploring various partnership models for the development and expansion of Maldivian's International Airline Operations. Opportunities include equity partnerships, joint ventures, and other collaborative business models.

## Incentives

- Allocation of traffic rights under the Air Service Agreements.
- Governmental support to operate from all the International Airports of the Maldives.

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