For immediate release, 13 February 2012

Satellite-based precision landing system now operational

Brussels, Belgium – On 9 th of February, the first fully operational GNSS Landing System (GLS) approach to CAT I decision height was made by an AirBerlin flight to Bremen airport in Germany; this marks the beginning of the operational use of satellite navigation (GNSS) for all phases of flight, including the most critical approach and automatic landing phases.

GLS is a precision approach operation using the ICAO-standard GBAS (Ground Based Augmentation System) components. It is the result of over 15 years of collaboration between multiple international partners. It is an alternative to the current precision approach standard, the instrument-based landing system (ILS).

GLS allows the same operations as ILS but removes several of its drawbacks, such as critical and sensitive areas on the airport that require changes in take-off holding position and aircraft spacing under low visibility operations, restricting thus capacity. Its interface is also designed to be very similar to the ILS one, minimising therefore the need for additional pilot and air traffic controller training.

EUROCONTROL supported the development of GBAS since 1999 through active participation in ICAO standardisation activities and developed its own GBAS programme in 2001. Since 2009 the EUROCONTROL activities have shifted to support primarily GBAS CAT III projects (fully automatic approach and landing), notably through SESAR and ICAO. “With Europe, the USA, Japan and Russia working on GBAS CAT III prototypes as an upgrade of the current CAT I systems, the full spectrum of precision approach operations using satellite navigation should become available in the future”, says Bo Redeborn, EUROCONTROL Director SESAR and Research.

Certified GBAS CAT I equipment is currently available from major avionics suppliers; more than 200 aircraft worldwide are already equipped and an increasing number of airlines are choosing GBAS. GBAS programmes are ongoing in more than 15 states worldwide, over 30 stations are installed in Russia and in addition to the one now operational in Germany, further systems in Spain, Australia and the USA are in the operational approval phase.

“Research is ongoing in and outside SESAR to reach more flexible approach designs to reduce noise and wake vortex and we are confident that this will be reached in the future”, says Bo Redeborn. “DFS has obtained the first worldwide full operational approval for a GBAS ground system and AirBerlin made the first successful landing following the accreditation, we wish them every success in their GBAS operations and hope that their example will soon followed by many others”, he adds.

For further information, please contact:
Kyla Evans/Catherine De Smedt, Tel: +32 2 729 50 95 Email: press@eurocontrol.int
Note to Editors:
EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs and respecting the environment. EUROCONTROL has 39 Member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. On 8 October 2002, the Member States and the European Community signed a Protocol on the Accession of the European Community to the revised EUROCONTROL Convention. Pending its entry into force after ratification by all Parties, certain provisions of the Protocol are already being provisionally applied.