

## Editorial

On 12 October, 1989, 60 years will have elapsed since the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules relating to International Carriage by Air was signed in Warsaw.

The date marks an event worth commemorating in aviation and air law circles, and even beyond, for few international agreements on air law, if any, can claim such widespread acceptance and have left such an indelible mark on subsequent developments as the 'Warsaw Convention', as it is commonly called. The very fact that a number of important agreements of later date, such as the Hague Protocol, the Guadalajara Convention and the Guatemala Protocol all have their roots in it – together forming the so-called 'Warsaw System' – emphasizes the point.

Concluded at a time when commercial aviation was still in its infancy it is not surprising, however, that some of the basic conceptions underlying the original Convention have not been left untouched by the passage of time and needed modifying. Impressive technological progress, speeded up in no mean measure by World War II, made this inevitable, as did the sweeping political, economic and social changes that followed in its wake. To quote but one instance, strong pressure has been exercised, as time went by, with a view to obtaining a shift in the carrier's liability rules from fault liability to absolute liability. Despite all this the original terms and structure of the Warsaw Convention remained standing, and to this day it displays its vitality in the small print of every international airline ticket. At the same time, viewed from a less legalistic angle, there is no denying that it has rendered unparalleled services not only to civil aviation, but also to the public at large.

To mark the occasion, Air Law has thought it appropriate to publish two special issues detailing various aspects of 'Warsaw' against the background of the present-day situation. Readers' contributions to these publications, especially when featuring suggestions for change or revision, will be most welcome.