

THE AIRLINES THEMSELVES, SUCH AS ALLIANCES, MERGERS, JOINT VENTURES, PARTNERSHIPS OR TAKEOVERS - ALL ARE LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT BEARING ON THE PROSPECTIVE RE-NEGOTIATION OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE EC AND THIRD COUNTRIES.

AIR AGREEMENTS PROVIDE THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULED AIR SERVICES. AIRLINES CANNOT OPERATE, GIVEN THEIR HEAVY INVESTMENT IN EQUIPMENT AND RUNNING COSTS, IN AN UNCERTAIN ENVIRONMENT WHERE GROUND RULES ARE IN CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF CHANGE. FOR CURRENT OPERATIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING, THEY NEED A FRAME OF REFERENCE THAT IS LEGALLY SECURE AND PREDICTABLE. IT IS NOT, THEREFORE, TOO EARLY TO START A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IF ONLY TO PREPARE THE GROUND AND TEST WHAT IS DOABLE. AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY'S COMMON AIR TRANSPORT POLICY FOR AIR RELATIONS AND AGREEMENTS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES MAY HELP CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMULATION OF COMMUNITY POLICY DECISIONS INFORMED BY THE LIKELY EXTERNAL EFFECTS OF ITS POLICY OBJECTIVES. BY THE SAME TOKEN THIRD COUNTRIES WOULD ALSO GAIN A BETTER GRASP OF PROSPECTIVE CHANGES IN DETERMINING THE ADJUSTMENTS THAT WILL BE REQUIRED. SUCH MANAGEMENT OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD TO 1992 AND BEYOND WOULD HELP CALIBRATE THE INEVITABLE TOWARDS THE DIGESTIBLE.