[MT] Directive on Programmes and Advertisements Broadcast During the Electoral Period

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Following the issue of the Presidential writ that general elections will be held on 8 March 2008, together with local council elections for 23 localities in Malta and Gozo, the Broadcasting Authority issued a Directive governing programmes and advertisements broadcast between 11 February and 8 March 2008. This Directive, which came into force on 11 February 2008, requires all radio and television stations to submit their programme schedules for approval to the Broadcasting Authority so that the latter would be in a position to ensure that during the electoral campaign periods all political parties are given an opportunity to air their views and that all programmes containing political content ensure a level playing field between all the political parties concerned, in the interest of fair and democratic elections.

Care has to be taken during this period to ensure that all programmes and all advertisements are free of material that could be interpreted as favouring or giving undue exposure to any political party or candidate, or which might be reasonably considered as being directed towards a political end. In particular it is not permissible in the case of advertisements commissioned by public or other entities: to allow persons who have submitted their candidature for these elections to appear in such advertisements; that a programme is presented by a person who has submitted his or her candidature for these elections when such person is not a regular employee of the station broadcasting such programme; that the person who has submitted his or her candidature for these elections participates in a regular manner in a programme during the said period. A candidate is not considered to have participated regularly when s/he participates in less than two editions of the same programme in the above-mentioned period.

During the day preceding the elections and on the actual day of polling (hereinafter referred to as “the silence period”), all forms of broadcasting that might influence voters are prohibited. Broadcasting stations have to avoid a situation where during the silence period they broadcast programmes, which could be reasonably interpreted as broadcasting with a view to influence voters. All forms of presentation in the broadcasting media of political parties, candidates and other movements and organisations involved in the elections must cease. Broadcasting stations cannot broadcast information, statements, press and media releases issued by the government, the opposition, candidates, politicians,

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political parties and other movements and organisations involved in the elections, and other forms of broadcasting that are, openly or in a covert manner, of a political nature, have political content, or which may influence the decisions of the voters. Nor may informative advertisements commissioned by public entities, including public service announcements, be broadcast unless these are of public interest and of an urgent nature.

The following is also prohibited during the two-day silence period: agitation, information related to an electoral campaign, and announcements designed for presentation of programmes, logos, mottos and symbols of a political party and a candidate. All forms of media presentations concerning the electoral campaign (such as free presentations, political propaganda, discussion programmes, interviews, etc.) are also prohibited.

Broadcasting Authority Directive of 6 February 2008 on Programmes and Advertisements Broadcast during the Period 11 February to 8 March 2008

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