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## AMA chair presents the annual report to media outlets

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Gentian Sala, chair of Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) presented a summary of AMA's 2014 annual report to media outlets, while the report will be discussed in Parliamentary Media Commission this month. Sala focused on the range of problems the institution faces and shortcomings from last year, on AMA's current work plans, and especially on digital switchover process.

More specifically, the chairman reported that AMA has had serious shortcomings in carrying out its functions and duties in 2014, facing different problems, such as:

- inability to approve legal acts that are necessary for regulating the activity of audiovisual media;
- continuation of unlicensed activity of digital and analogue broadcasters;
- continuous increase of media operators, without specific criteria;
- lack of efficient monitoring of operators meeting their license criteria;
- inability to execute AMA decisions and weakened authority of the institution.

According to the report, there have been serious shortcomings in administering the spectrum of frequencies, resulting in illegal occupation and use of this spectrum from audiovisual media operators. In addition, a significant number of operators fails to comply with the legislation (failure to pay financial dues, broadcasting outside their licensed area, failure to meet license obligations, etc.) Particularly problematic in this aspect are the cable operators, 60% of which continuously break the law. Another significant deficiency of AMA has been the failure to approve secondary legislation: 26 more regulations or other secondary legislation have to be approved or drafted. In addition, AMA has been involved in a high number of lawsuits, mainly related to labor relations, but also to other issues related to license decisions, which have further deteriorated AMA's financial situation.

Sala reported that it is a brief period that covers the moment when the new AMA Board was reconstituted to six members, including the chairman, to the end of 2014. Efforts of the

institutions in this period have focused on consultation meetings with national operators and cable operators, trying to improve partnership between AMA and the operators. According to Sala a direct result has been that of improving financial situation of the institution after operators have started to pay their financial dues. He also said that AMA is working to adapt new regulations to the technological requirements, while also improving the transparency of the institution mainly through re-organization of its website. AMA has also started procedures to establish the new Council of Complaints, as well as the efforts to apply for funding on a project that would modernize the monitoring studio.

Sala paid special attention to digital switchover process, in view of the fast approaching deadline and the complexity of the situation. He considered the process referring to three main sectors, but admitting that the process has stagnated for a long time: preparations for digitalization of public broadcaster, licensing of historical digital operators, and preparations and licensing of local analogue operators. While stating that all efforts are being made to realize this process within the June 17 deadline, he was pessimistic that digital switchover would be completed in all the territory within this date, saying that the aim was to cover the largest urban centers by that time. He mentioned that a significant delay and obstacle has been the process of digitalizing the network of public broadcaster RTSH, which has been blocked for a long time due to lawsuits and delayed negotiations.

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