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North American Broadcasters Association

AUDIO METADATA TO INDICATE DIALOGUE LOUDNESS FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

(Question ITU-R 58/6)

The North American Broadcasters Association (NABA, www.nabanet.com) is an association of broadcasters in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and the NABA Technical Committee is its standing technical body. NABA is thus in a position to present the technical viewpoints of the most authoritative association of professional North American Broadcasters in television and sound programme production, post-production, and distribution for terrestrial, satellite, and cable broadcasting.

NABA is a Sector Member of ITU-R and a long-time participant in ITU-R Study Groups, Working Parties, Task Groups, Rapporteur Groups, etc. NABA numbers among its members Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and members of the above groups. NABA also participates widely in the ITU work on radio, television and multimedia services and has a strong interest in programme production and distribution.

NABA members have been considering the subject of audio programme loudness and believe that metadata is highly useful to help solve the problems of loudness fluctuations between programmes. NABA believes that an ITU-R Recommendation on the topic of metadata would be useful, and offers the attached for consideration by Working Party 6C.

It is well known that audio loudness fluctuations between programmes can be a significant problem in digital television. NABA believes that the problem can be lessened by employing audio metadata, or by setting specifications for target loudness. NABA encourages the creation of suitable metadata at the point of programme production, and also encourages that metadata continue to be bound to the programme essence as it moves through the delivery chain. Audio metadata for digital television, including metadata to indicate programme dialogue loudness should be employed, and should specify that when metadata is employed, the loudness measurement method specified in Recommendation ITU-R BS.1770 (Note 1) should be used to set the metadata value indicating dialogue level, and that the audio metadata should remain intact with the audio essence. When metadata cannot or does not remain intact with the essence, NABA believes that a target value for dialogue loudness should be specified by the ITU-R.

Studies working toward the establishment of a suitable ITU-R *Recommendation* on audio loudness are underway in Study Group 6 and in many areas of the World including North America, and NABA participates actively in all this work and has submitted the ITU-R DNR 6/61-E “Dialogue loudness for the international exchange of television programmes” presently attached to the SG-6 Chairman’s Report. As the ongoing studies on audio loudness, including those of the US Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC), are completed, NABA looks forward to the completion of an ITU-R *Recommendation* on audio loudness and offers the above thoughts in the process.

NOTE 1 – The algorithm specified in Recommendation ITU-R BS.1770 for loudness measurement is an integrating measure; when applied to the measurement of dialogue level the integration should be paused (gated off) during times of silence.
