2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)
*Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs
– Digital development, partnerships and funding*

6-7 October 2020, 12:00 – 15:00 CAR (Virtual meeting)
with preparatory break-out sessions on 5 October 2020 (12:00 – 13:30 CAT time)

CONTRIBUTION BY Internet Society

TITLE: Unleashing Community Networks: Innovative Licensing Approaches

EXPECTED DURATION OF PRESENTATION: [20 minutes]

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❖ **Africa Regional Initiatives:** [Select the Regional Initiative(s) relevant for your contribution]

[No] **AFR Regional initiative 1** – Building digital economies and fostering innovation in Africa

[Yes] **AFR Regional initiative 2** – Promotion of emerging broadband technologies

[No] **AFR Regional initiative 3** – Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technology

[No] **AFR Regional initiative 4** – Strengthening human and institutional capacity building

[No] **AFR Regional initiative 5** – Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting

❖ **Related ITU development thematic:** [Select the thematic area(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes] Networks and digital infrastructure

[No] Cybersecurity

[No] Emergency telecommunications

[No] Environment

[Yes] Digital policy and regulation

[Yes] Capacity development

[Yes] Digital services and applications

[Yes] Digital inclusion

[No] Digital innovation ecosystems

[No] Statistics and data for evidence-based decision making

❖ **Year(s) of implementation:** [Select the year(s) for which your action/project/initiative is relevant]

[Yes] 2018	[Yes] 2019	[Yes] 2020	[Yes] 2021	[Yes/No] Others

❖ **COVID-19 response related initiative:** [Please indicate if your action/project/initiative is relevant for COVID-19 response]

[Yes] COVID-19 response related initiative

Background [max 300 words]

Community networks provide a sustainable solution to address the connectivity gaps that exist in urban, remote, and rural areas around the world. In Africa, where these gaps are more evident, a recent survey was able to identify 37 community networks initiatives in 12 African countries, of which 25 are considered active. Community Networks need policy and regulatory assistance in some countries to get started.

Proposal [max 400 words]

Community networks are working with policymakers and regulators who, in turn, are enabling communities to connect via community-built networks—networks developed by local communities, with local communities, for local communities. Through common sense regulatory and policy change and dialogue with community network advocates, government can unleash the potential of community networks and allow unserved and underserved areas to realize the transformative benefits of having access to affordable connectivity.

PLEASE SUBMIT THE CONTRIBUTION BY 15 SEPTEMBER TO ITU-RO-AFRICA@ITU.INT