

**Statement on behalf of Virginia Gildesleeve International and on
on behalf of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development at
Panel I: Accelerating infrastructure investments
Financing for Development Forum, United Nations, 12 April 2021
Ms. Anita Thomas, Representative to the UN
Chair, NGO Committee on Financing for Development**

- Good Morning Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen. My name is Anita Thomas, I represent Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund an NGO accredited to the Economic and Social Council and Chair the NGO Committee on Financing for Development in New York. I share this view on behalf of the NGO Committee.
- No technology has proven more valuable to the global economy and to people everywhere than internet connectivity during the last 13 months as it facilitated transmitting and receiving government relief measures, moving into remote work settings, joining remote classrooms, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of micro small and medium enterprises to name a view.
- Barriers to internet access and usage in low- and middle-income countries including poor network coverage, device affordability, and low digital literacy proved to be major stumbling blocks in addressing the fallout from the pandemic.
- Digital inclusion is a key driver for economic growth and poverty eradication. Yet, 3.7 billion people, nearly half of the world's population, remain offline, 197 million fewer women own a phone than men, 1.7 billion people are still unbanked and the gender gap in account ownership continues to stay at 9% in developing countries for over a decade.
- When reviewed in the context of the economic downturn catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for development of and investment in affordable, sustainable, resilient, and reliable digital infrastructure has never been so great.
- Submarine cables are the backbone of digital infrastructure and underpin sustainable development. They carry more than 98% of internet data video and telephone traffic and are unmatched for their reliability, for their speed, volume of traffic and low cost in comparison to satellite communications.
- Ensuring the sustainability, security and expansion of the [network](#) of some 750,000 miles of seabed cables that crisscross the oceans' depths are crucial for enhancing universal education opportunities with on-line classrooms, and improve medical care provided through telemedicine and for the future for ocean climate monitoring, tsunami warning, and fundamental ocean research.
- Digital trade could help us build a more resilient global economy and create countless employment opportunities for people around the world in areas as diverse as healthcare and professional services.
- Reducing barriers to entry is essential to drive capital into the sustainable infrastructure. In doing this, reliability, transparency, accountability of infrastructure based blended -

finance projects, conducive regulatory frameworks, and consumer protection measures need to be given prime attention.

- Prioritizing off-grid renewable energy projects, nature-based solutions, and ring-fencing public financing to provide digital access and energy access for poor and underserved communities is crucial to build forward better and to leave no one behind.