

# PEOPLE, PLANET, CLIMATE ACTION

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## ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's leading experts to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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## INTRODUCTION

On 30 September 2024, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired its 40<sup>th</sup> episode of the Voices of Sustainability series, featuring Satya S. Tripathi, Secretary-General of the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet. The episode delved into global strategies for sustainability, focusing on critical

themes such as climate action, financial inclusion, and the empowerment of indigenous communities. Satya shared his insights on the urgent need for collaboration across sectors and the importance of regenerative development in addressing the world's most pressing environmental challenges.



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## SUMMARY

The 40<sup>th</sup> episode of the Voices of Sustainability series focused on global strategies for sustainability. It featured Satya S. Tripathi, Secretary-General of the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet, who shared his insights on the critical role of sustainable development. The episode covered key topics, including climate action, financial inclusion, and how indigenous communities contribute to safeguarding the environment and driving sustainable solutions.

Satya began by outlining the work of the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet, a coalition of over 300 organisations worldwide. The alliance focuses on addressing climate challenges and ecosystem preservation by fostering collaboration across sectors. Satya stressed that sustainability solutions require partnerships, and that progress is impossible without cooperation between diverse stakeholders. He emphasised the need to bring together individuals and organisations from different backgrounds, advocating that through collective effort, the seemingly impossible can be achieved.

A key theme of the conversation was the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Satya, partnerships (SDG 17) should have been the primary focus from the start, as achieving other SDGs is reliant on building strong collaborations. He highlighted the paradox of the world's wealth, noting that while there are ample financial resources globally, many sustainability initiatives remain underfunded due to a lack of bridges between financiers and companies making an impact. Satya argued that financial inclusion, when combined with social and environmental returns, holds the potential to scale sustainability efforts significantly.

The conversation then shifted to the role of multilateral organisations in global climate action. Drawing from his extensive experience with the United Nations, Satya acknowledged the importance



It's about understanding each other and sharing the priorities for people and the planet. And then the second thing is to look at climate action or climate change--not as a problem, but as a tremendous opportunity. When you do that, you will find the possibilities emerging.

### Satya S. Tripathi

Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet  
Secretary-General



of these institutions as conveners, bringing together leaders from around the world. However, he noted that the true challenge lies in maintaining these connections and translating discussions into concrete actions. Satya stressed the importance of institutions like the Global Alliance acting as intermediaries to keep dialogues alive and encourage collaboration long after international meetings have concluded.

A significant portion of the episode was devoted to the importance of indigenous communities in environmental conservation. He called on the global community to move beyond superficial support for indigenous people and engage them meaningfully in sustainability projects. Satya also discussed success stories from Latin America, Africa and Indonesia, where indigenous communities have played a central role in environmental protection.



Satya expressed concern about the over-exploitation of natural resources, stating that much of the world is operating beyond the ‘threshold of renewal’. He compared nature’s ability to regenerate with that of a bank account—once the principal is depleted, there is nothing left from which to draw. This over-extraction, Satya argued, has led to the breaching of planetary boundaries, and immediate action is necessary to prevent irreversible damage.

Turning to solutions, Satya identified several sectors where climate resilience could be strengthened. He discussed the potential of renewable energy sources like solar power, which have become more cost-effective in recent years, and stressed the need to break down silos that often exist between sectors. He also highlighted successful projects, such as the Tropical Landscapes Finance Facility in Indonesia, which brought together banks, private companies and local communities to develop sustainable rubber plantations while protecting forests.

In addition, Satya provided insights into the importance of creating carbon markets and repurposing harmful subsidies to incentivise

practices. Citing an example from India, he explained how shifting agricultural policies could reduce reliance on synthetic fertilisers and promote zero-chemical farming, saving billions in subsidies while also improving food security and environmental outcomes.

The episode concluded with a call to action, as Satya urged countries to focus on their immediate, local challenges, particularly in vulnerable populations. While global climate action is important, he argued, nations must first address air, water and food security within their borders. He pointed out that while individual countries may seem small in the context of global climate challenges, their collective efforts are crucial to creating a sustainable future.

Through this episode, Satya S. Tripathi provided a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of the global community and the need for unified action. His message was clear: collaboration, regenerative practices, and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge are essential for addressing the planet’s most pressing environmental challenges.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

### Satya S. Tripathi

Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet  
Secretary-General

Satya S. Tripathi is a development economist and lawyer with over 40 years of experience. He currently serves as the Secretary-General of the Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet and Chancellor of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, the world's largest institution dedicated to indigenous cultures. With more than two decades of service at the United Nations, Mr. Tripathi has held key positions, including UN Assistant Secretary-General and Head of UN Environment's New York Office. His work spans human rights investigations in Bosnia, post-tsunami recovery in Aceh, and leading UN efforts on climate and sustainability initiatives, including the US \$1 billion REDD+ partnership in Indonesia.

An alumnus of the London School of Economics, Mr. Tripathi is a widely published author on sustainability and has lectured at prestigious universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and Oxford. He played a pivotal role in founding the Tropical Landscapes Finance Facility in Indonesia and the Sustainable India Finance Facility, both leveraging private finance for public good.

Additionally, he serves on the Global Steering Group of the Global Ethical Finance Initiative and is a Trustee at Water Unite.



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## OUTCOMES

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Collaboration is essential to sustainability and requires cross-sector partnerships to bridge gaps and scale solutions

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Financial inclusion drives sustainability by linking funds to innovative and impactful projects

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Indigenous knowledge is crucial for conservation and environmental protection

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Regenerative development focuses on restoring ecosystems rather than exploiting them

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Sustainability metrics need improvement to better reflect true environmental and social impact

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Local climate action is vital as nations address immediate issues like air and water security to build resilience

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