VOICES
OF SUSTAINABILITY
BY THE ZAYED SUSTAINABILITY PRIZE

AI FOR GOOD: DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE
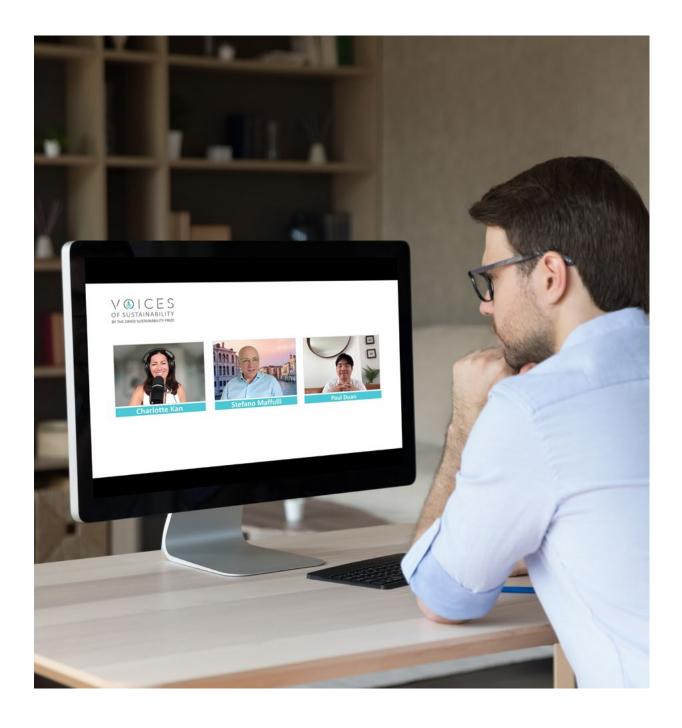
Voices of Sustainability Summary Report

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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 thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.

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INTRODUCTION

On 30 May, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired the 48th episode of its virtual fireside chat series Voices of Sustainability. This episode explored the evolving intersection of artificial intelligence, ethics, and sustainability. The discussion featured Stefano Maffulli, Executive Director of the Open Source Initiative (OSI), and Paul Duan, Founder and President of Bayes Impact.

The speakers shared perspectives on the critical role of transparency, open-source principles, and ethical innovation in ensuring that AI advances sustainability goals while remaining accessible, trustworthy, and inclusive.

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SUMMARY

The 48th episode of Voices of Sustainability, titled 'AI for Good: Driving Sustainability and Social Change,' convened two leading experts to examine how artificial intelligence can be developed and deployed to promote sustainable and equitable progress.

Moderated by journalist Charlotte Kan, Maffulli opened the conversation by outlining the mission of the Open Source Initiative (OSI), emphasising its decades-long commitment to transparency, user rights, and collaboration in software licensing. As AI diverges from traditional software models, OSI is working to extend these foundational principles to machine learning, particularly by advocating for access to model weights, training data documentation, and community governance.

> To make AI truly sustainable and equitable, users must have access to the models, data, and decisions behind the technology. That's how we create systems people can trust and improve.

Stefano Maffulli
Executive Director
Open Source Initiative

Maffulli cautioned that opacity in AI systems undermines trust and social accountability. He stressed that open-source frameworks can serve as a blueprint for building transparent, inclusive, and responsible AI infrastructures that uphold public interest and empower communities.
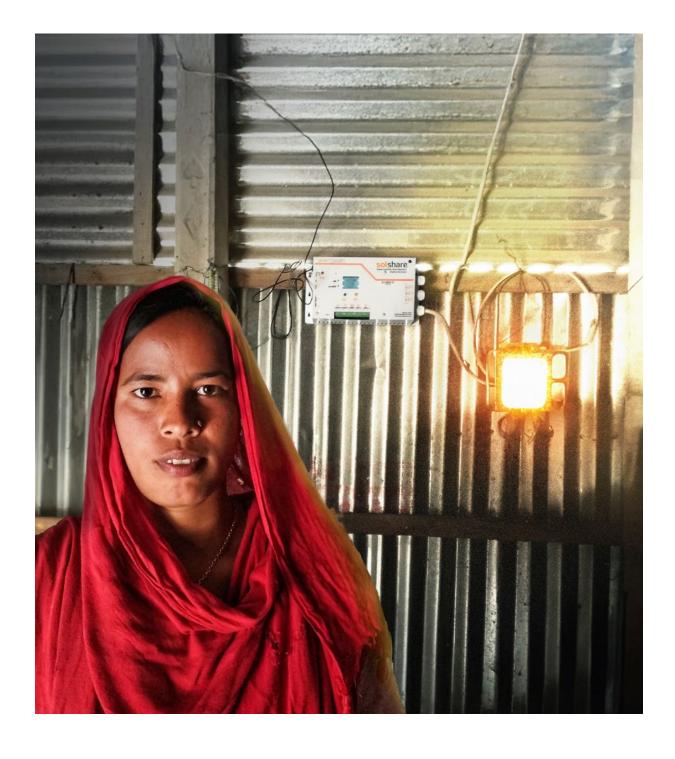
Duan introduced Bayes Impact's work as a nonprofit using AI to serve underserved populations. He shared practical examples, including KAI, an AI-powered assistant designed to support social workers managing large caseloads. By streamlining follow-ups, managing unstructured data, and reducing mental load, KAI exemplifies how AI can enhance human capacity rather than replace it.

> We need to democratise AI by putting it in the hands of those who serve the public –community health workers, teachers, social workers – and build it for their needs, not for profit.

Paul Duan
Founder and President
Bayes Impact

Duan highlighted the importance of purpose-built, efficient AI models that avoid the excessive energy demands of general-purpose systems. He advocated for data commons and domain-specific models as scalable solutions for ethical, low-carbon AI.

Both speakers emphasised the importance of trust, transparency, and user empowerment in driving adoption of AI technologies. They agreed that equitable access to AI tools requires open development environments and nonprofit-led innovation tailored to the public good.

In closing, the panel reflected on AI's transformative potential for medical research, climate modelling, and equitable development. The conversation underscored the urgent need for a shift from profit-driven to purpose-driven innovation

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BIOGRAPHIES

Stefano Maffulli

Executive Director
Open Source Initiative

Stefano Maffulli leads the Open Source Initiative, an organization that defines and promotes open-source software licensing. Under his leadership, OSI is expanding its mission to address emerging challenges in AI by ensuring transparency, accountability, and user control over machine learning systems. Maffulli is a strong advocate for aligning AI development with open, community-driven principles.

Paul Duan

Founder and President
Bayes Impact

Paul Duan is the founder of Bayes Impact, a tech nonprofit committed to using AI for social good. A former data scientist in Silicon Valley, Duan founded Bayes Impact to redirect powerful AI technologies toward solving public sector challenges. His organisation builds tools for social workers and public services that prioritize ethics, accessibility, and community empowerment.

The conversation was moderated by:

Charlotte Kan

Journalist

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OUTCOMES

Open-source principles are essential to building transparent and trustworthy AI systems that serve public interest

Nonprofit-driven, purpose-built AI can empower frontline workers and address social challenges without replacing human judgment

Smaller, task-specific models are often more energy efficient and ethically sound than large general-purpose models

Data commons and curated training datasets can reduce AI's environmental footprint while improving performance

Trust and transparency are key to accelerating the responsible adoption of AI across sectors

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