



PIONEERING  
POSITIVE  
CHANGE

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# 01

## 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 some of the top global thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



# 02

## INTRODUCTION

The Zayed Sustainability Prize broadcast the 30<sup>th</sup> episode of its virtual fireside chat series called Voices of Sustainability on 14 November. The episode featured young sustainability leaders, Helen Watts, Executive Director, Student Energy; Brighton Kaoma, CEO & Co-Founder, Amano Learning and Global Advisor, UN SDSN Youth; and Garret Molloy, Climate Ambassador, Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce.

The insightful dialogue served as a platform to explore the pivotal role of youth at COP28 UAE. The speakers shared their experiences as youth leaders and offered valuable insights and strategies for inspiring the leaders of tomorrow.



# 03

## SUMMARY

The 30<sup>th</sup> episode titled ‘Pioneering Positive Change,’ presented a rich tapestry of dialogue, challenge and aspiration. Helen Watts, Brighton Kaoma and Garret Molloy, three young sustainability leaders, convened to explore the crucial role of young individuals in the climate change battle and the imperative to empower youth for a sustainable future.

Helen leveraging her expertise as Executive Director of Student Energy, initiated the discussion. She underscored the significant escalation in dialogues surrounding youth, climate change, sustainability and energy transition over the last five years. Helen offered deep insights into what motivates youth engagement and strategies to channel their energy productively. Her emphasis was on transforming youths from bystanders to proactive participants in crafting their futures.



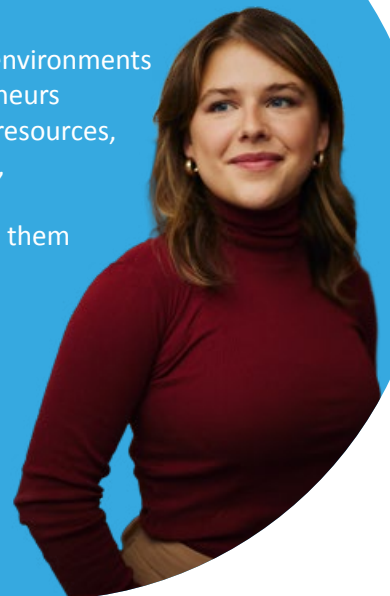
In today’s globally connected world, collaboration is crucial. Global youth must actively work to create realistic and meaningful avenues for collaboration, as relying on external solutions for our challenges is no longer feasible

**Brighton Kaoma**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
Amano Learning &  
Global Advisor  
UN SDSN Youth



Creating enabling environments for youth entrepreneurs involves providing resources, training, education, connections and mentorship to help them channel their skills and passion into high-impact roles

**Helen Watts**  
Executive Director  
Student Energy



She highlighted the necessity of collaboratively designing programmes with young people, valuing their innovative ideas and perspectives. However, Helen also pointed out the hurdles faced by young climate entrepreneurs, such as the scarcity of funding and minimal grant sizes, that often impede the rise of promising projects.

The dialogue then shifted towards the creation of environments conducive to youth entrepreneurship, incorporating vital resources like accessible education, mentorship and networking opportunities. Helen advocated for realistic resource allocation and more substantial grants to empower young leaders to effect enduring impacts. She also identified sociocultural factors as critical, including increasing awareness of opportunities, appreciating young people’s skills and nurturing their self-assurance.



A just transition involves inclusivity, engaging all of society for diverse perspectives and better policies. It also highlights the importance of lifting people out of poverty as a prerequisite for creating enabling environments

#### Garret Molloy

Climate Ambassador  
Environmental Education  
Unit, An Taisce

Garret built on Helen's points, emphasising the critical role of supportive environments in cultivating youth leadership. He urged leaders and institutions to back and invest in young climate leaders, providing them with opportunities for meaningful change. Brighton then underscored the value of intergenerational mentorship and the profound influence of leaders who believe in young people's ability to enact positive change.

Echoing Brighton's sentiments, Garret highlighted the significance of nurturing environments at both micro and macro levels. He described micro-level environments as spaces for dialogue on climate change, while macro-level environments include

institutions advocating for a carbon-neutral agenda and climate education in schools.

Garret also stressed the necessity of poverty alleviation for establishing supportive environments in developing countries, which is essential for meaningful climate activism. Meanwhile, Helen shared her experiences of learning from failures and addressed skill gaps through foundational training, language proficiency, and education on fundraising and investment readiness.

Concluding the discussion, Garret reiterated the concept that youth are essential agents of change in the climate crisis. He stressed the importance of their involvement in policymaking, consultations and legislation, advocating for empowering youth to shape policies and hold leaders to account.

Throughout the episode, the significance of youth engagement and inclusivity in addressing the global climate crisis was a recurring theme. Helen and Brighton advocated for including those from underrepresented backgrounds and regions most severely affected by climate change. They called for platforms that enable young people to participate in climate-related forums like COP28 UAE, including youth advisory bodies and robust support for youth delegates.

In summary, the 30<sup>th</sup> episode of "Voices of Sustainability" conveyed a compelling message: achieving meaningful change in climate action transcends financial investments and requires a shift in mindset towards global collaboration and inclusivity. It calls for recognising the interconnected nature of climate challenges and the shared responsibility to tackle them. As COP28 UAE approaches, the episode echoed a clear call to action: empower the youth, embrace diversity, and foster global partnerships to hasten progress towards a more sustainable future for everyone.

# 04

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## PARTICIPANTS



### Helen Watts

Executive Director  
Student Energy

Helen Watts is Student Energy's Executive Director, a Forbes 30 Under 30 lister, on the Corporate Knight's 30 Under 30, and is a recognised young clean energy and intergenerational equity advocate. Since 2017, Helen has worked with Student Energy to empower tens of thousands of young people around the world to work on solutions for a clean and equitable energy transition.



### Brighton Kaoma

Co-Founder & CEO  
Amano Learning & Global Advisor, UN SDSN Youth

Brighton Kaoma is the Founder & CEO of Amano Learning, a B2B online learning and training platform for professionals at all career stages within organizations to develop skills in leadership, sustainability, and digital from top-tier C-Suite executives. Prior to founding Amano Learning, Brighton served as Global Director in the United Nations systems in New York where he led global programs on the sustainable development goals, global network building, and youth development across 127 countries. He serves on the advisory boards of Reverse the Red at IUCN, SDG Academy at UN SDSN, and Radio Workshop in South Africa.



### Garret Molloy

Climate Ambassador  
Environmental Education Unit, An Taisce

Garret Molloy is an environmental activist from Dublin aged 18. He is studying Economics and Political Science at Stanford University. He is an Irish Climate Ambassador, a delegate to the Youth Assembly on Climate in the Irish Parliament and a contributor to the Voice of Brussels. Beginning his climate journey at the National Science Fair, has given him a background in Climate Science which has led him to COP26.

# 05

## OUTCOMES



Youth-led climate entrepreneurship is gaining momentum, signifying its growing importance



Empowering youth through co-creation is crucial for innovative solutions



Funding challenges, such as limited access and small grants, hinder progress from advancing beyond their initial stages



Enabling environments with resources and mentorship opportunities support youth leadership



Youth's role in policymaking is vital for addressing climate complexities



COP28 UAE emphasises the urgency of youth participation in climate discussions and the need for youth advisory bodies and support for young delegates

Watch the full episode the Zayed Sustainability Prize's YouTube channel

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