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# “Technology & Sustainability: Empowering youth for a greener future”

Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event



## Context

Since 2009, Hecho por Nosotros (HxN) and its sister enterprise, Animaná, have led systemic change in the textile and fashion industry by promoting sustainable value chains and circularity. Their focus is on creating regenerative business models that prioritise environmental preservation, social equity, and cultural heritage. Through collaboration with artisans, communities, and industry stakeholders, Hecho por Nosotros and Animaná work to reshape the industry toward a more ethical and sustainable future.

Hecho por Nosotros and Animaná, in collaboration with Stanford Angels and Entrepreneurs, co-hosted the event “Technology & Sustainability: Empowering Youth for a Greener Future” as part of the United Nations Summit of the Future. The event fostered dynamic discussions on how technology can drive sustainable development, with a particular focus on empowering youth to lead efforts in building a greener, more inclusive future. Highlighting critical areas such as quality education, responsible consumption, and climate action, the event addressed how these issues intersect with the broader goals of sustainable cities and communities, as well as the importance of partnerships for advancing these aims.

The event focused on how digital innovation can drive sustainable consumption and production, with a particular emphasis on empowering youth. Experts, Hecho por Nosotros collaborators, and government officials discussed the role of technology in promoting circular economies, supporting traditional communities, and preserving cultural heritage. The discussions highlighted the importance of collaboration across sectors and the integration of resilient business models throughout the value chain to achieve long-term sustainable growth. Participants advocated for leveraging digital tools to accelerate progress on key Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in education, climate action, and economic sustainability.

## Summary

The event started with opening remarks from Adriana Marina, setting a collaborative and engaging tone for the discussions ahead. This was followed by an insightful keynote address from co-host of the event, Radhika Shah, Co-President of Stanford Angels & Entrepreneurs, who explored the critical intersection of technology, youth empowerment, and sustainability. Camilla Tettoni, serving as moderator and Ambassador for Hecho por Nosotros, then provided an overview of the event’s agenda and introduced the distinguished speakers, framing the dialogue on the event’s key themes and objectives.

In her address, Radhika Shah, Co-President of Stanford Angels & Entrepreneurs, emphasised the urgency of addressing climate crises and inequality, highlighting the potential for technology and youth empowerment to drive inclusive, sustainable futures. She praised young change-makers, particularly from Silicon Valley, for their technological expertise and commitment to sustainability. Radhika Shah discussed how digital tools, such as blockchain, can enhance transparency in supply chains and promote sustainable production. She also underscored the importance of bridging the digital divide, particularly for marginalised communities, and applauded Hecho por Nosotros for its efforts to provide digital training in the Global South. Moreover, she introduced the upcoming launch of the SDG Digital Transformation and Sustainability Solutions Lab during Climate Week, which aims to leverage technology, academia, and industry to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Shah closed with a call to action, urging participants to connect with their inner changemakers to advance inclusive, sustainable solutions.

Adding to these points, Adriana Marina emphasised the importance of connecting with artisans, professionals, and individuals committed to reconnecting with nature and preserving cultural heritage.

She highlighted the need to transform current challenges into opportunities by fostering collaboration and leveraging technological innovation. Adriana acknowledged that shifting from competition to collaboration remains a significant challenge but is critical for driving progress.

Adriana Marina then introduced the first speaker, Juan Carlos Ochoa, a cacique (leader of an Indigenous community) of Chistin, a province in Catamarca to voice his culture and make a call for action. Juan Carlos expressed gratitude for the opportunity to showcase his community's rich cultural heritage, particularly in traditional textile production using sheep and llama wool. He emphasised the significance of Hecho por Nosotros in promoting and preserving their craftsmanship, stating, "I am grateful that we are incorporated into this initiative to ensure our traditions are not forgotten and are passed onto future generations." The unity fostered by shared cultural threads and talents was celebrated, as he underscored the need for collaboration to address community needs.

Lastly, Camilla Tettoni welcomed participants and introduced herself as the moderator for the session, bringing together thought leaders, innovators, and change-makers to explore how technology can address pressing environmental and social challenges. In a world facing a climate crisis, unsustainable practices, and economic inequality, there is a compelling need to reimagine our interactions with the environment and enhance sustainable models for a greener and more just future.

She introduced how the session will explore three core themes: the integration of traditional knowledge with technological innovation to develop regenerative models that honour cultural heritage; the promotion of ethical and transparent value chains, particularly in sustainable fashion; and the critical role of youth empowerment through technology.

Additionally, Adriana Marina introduced Juan Carlos Ochoa a Casique (leader of an indigenous community) of Chistin, a province in Catamarca to voice his culture and make a call to action.

## Main speakers

Following this, Paula Ruiz Diaz moderated a panel featuring the day's main speakers, which included:

- **Victoria Flores** (Ministry of Environment of the Government of Córdoba).
- **Hernán Najenson** (Lawyer, Subsecretary of the Ministry of Justice of the Government of Buenos Aires).
- **Marina Sofia Izaguirre** (Specialist in SME and entrepreneurship policy).
- **Nelly Garcia Lopez** (Assistant Professor Universidad de los Andes).
- **Estefani Jimenez Barja** (Bolivian Artisan and Entrepreneur).

## Victoria Flores

Victoria Flores, as the Minister of the Environment and Circular Economy for Córdoba, has been instrumental in integrating circular economy principles into the region's environmental policies. Her approach focuses on redefining waste management by recognizing waste as a resource rather than a burden. Under her leadership, the government has initiated several programs aimed at promoting sustainable practices and reducing landfill overflow. Flores emphasised that every piece of waste holds potential, stating, "**Transforming waste into**

**opportunities is not just an environmental necessity; it is a path to economic growth."**

A key discussion is how one can leverage technology to facilitate the transition towards a circular economy. This speaker highlighted that implementing advanced waste sorting technologies has been crucial in managing the province's waste effectively, especially in an area with numerous uncontrolled trash sites. By utilising digital platforms and innovative processes, the government has been able to classify and repurpose materials that were

previously discarded. This technological integration not only improves efficiency but also fosters a cultural shift in how communities perceive waste. According to Flores, **“Cultural change is essential; we need to educate citizens to view waste as a valuable resource, paving the way for innovation and green job creation.”**

This discussion was centred around the integration of circular economy principles into environmental policy, highlighting the essential role of technology in facilitating this transition. Key topics included redefining waste

as a resource, the importance of innovative waste sorting technologies, and the need for cultural change in how communities perceive and manage waste. Additionally, successful local initiatives were examined, particularly educational campaigns aimed at youth to promote sustainable consumption practices and partnerships with local organisations to enhance recycling efforts. Overall, Victoria Flores underscored the importance of a collaborative approach to drive sustainability and foster green job creation within the framework of a circular economy.

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## Hernán Najenson

Hernan then compared modern legal professionals to the “programmers” of the 19th century, shaping the socio-economic environment through legislation. He highlighted how current business practices, particularly corporate structures like shareholder liability and the separation of corporate personality,

have remained largely unchanged since the inception of trading companies, such as the Dutch East India Company. He stressed the need for businesses to shift from a shareholder-centric model to a stakeholder approach, arguing that lawyers and legal professionals, in collaboration with technology, will be instrumental in defining the new era of business rules and governance.

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## Marina Sofia Izaguirre

Marina Sofia Izaguirre, who works in government affairs at Cisco with experience in SME policy, discussed the significant role technology plays in addressing complex global challenges. At Cisco, they embed technology with a purpose, aiming for an inclusive future by connecting people and communities, particularly in rural areas, to improve education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Their focus on closing the digital divide and promoting social equity ties into their broader mission of creating a regenerative planet, a vision that goes beyond simply doing no harm to actively fostering a thriving world. Cisco prioritises energy efficiency in their products, helping customers accelerate their own renewable energy transitions. Research shows that energy efficiency is a top driver of

tech innovation, especially for SMEs in Latin America, though many face challenges in implementation due to budget constraints and lack of skilled talent.

The speaker highlighted the importance of equipping youth with the necessary tools and skills to implement technology, especially in the SME sector, where digital tools and energy-efficient practices, such as cloud services and hybrid work models, can significantly reduce emissions. She emphasised the role of collaboration and the power of technology in driving systematic change, echoing Adriana’s call for exchanging knowledge and working together to create sustainable solutions, especially for small communities.

## Nelly Garcia Lopez

Nelly Garcia Lopez, Assistant Professor at Universidad de los Andes, shared insights on her exploration of productivity in construction, particularly emphasising the need to balance technology with local traditions. While developed countries rely on high-tech, factory-based solutions, underdeveloped regions like Colombia—where 85% of the construction industry comprises small and medium enterprises—require approaches that empower local communities and respect traditional methods. She highlighted the value of traditional construction techniques, such as building houses with central patios that provide natural energy efficiency. Lopez argued that integrating modern technology with nature-based solutions, like rammed earth houses, can make structures more resilient while preserving cultural heritage. She stressed the importance of avoiding the imposition of external solutions and instead strengthening ties with local communities to ensure that sustainable construction methods align with local needs and traditions. Importing solutions without adaptation, she warned, risks overlooking the wisdom and creativity of the local workforce.

## Estefani Jimenez Barja

Estefani, a Bolivian artisan and textile entrepreneur, concluded the first section by sharing her thoughts on how entrepreneurship can inspire youth toward a more sustainable future. She emphasised the importance of preserving cultural traditions, which connect people with their roots and identity. In Bolivia, artisans not only create products but also live in harmony with nature, honouring techniques like the halka wevi, an ancient craft that symbolises mythical animals from the region. Stefani highlighted the significance of creating durable, high-quality garments that tell a story, urging young people to choose thoughtfully and embrace a lifestyle that values sustainability. She stressed that selecting artisanal garments is more than just a purchase—it's a connection to culture, the environment, and the planet. By staying rooted in tradition, young people can appreciate what truly matters and move away from fast fashion, which contributes to waste.

## Half-time:

### Hecho por Nosotros Collaborators and Partners Present their Work

Afterwards, the half-time section was presented where Hecho por Nosotros collaborators and partners presented their work and discussed their impact concerning how youth can use technology to empower a sustainable future.

## Speakers:

- **Gabriel Rivera Rio Zambrano**, Social Entrepreneur, Change Maker, and Ashoka fellow, describes in a pitch his organisation's alliance with HxN
- **Luisa Beatriz Muy Cuji**, Ecuadorian Artisan
- **Tricia Langman**, HxN Managing Partner & Leader of Ed-tech/Sustainability Strategist / Educator/ Design Thinking Specialist/Design
- **Romina di Giovanni**, HxN Partner, Organisational Coaching and Jairo Caro, HxN Partner
- **Gustavo Rincon**, HxN Collaborator
- **Andrea Alessandra Guevarra Pizarro**, HxN Collaborator, Youth x Youth
- **Vanesa Elizabeth Enriquez**, HxN Collaborator
- **Ximena Mogrovejo**, HxN Collaborator
- **Lara Jovanovich**, HxN Collaborator

## Gabriel Rivera Rio Zambrano

The first to present was Gabriel Rivera Rio Zambrano, a social entrepreneur, who concisely outlined his own organisation's alliance with Hecho por Nosotros. Rivera is founder of Altitud ONG, a social enterprise which works with the goal to lift women in Mexico out of the brutal conditions of fashion workshops in the country. For over 15 years the ONG has been working to provide access to productive assets, educational programmes, and job opportunities, enabling women in Northern Mexico to achieve financial independence.

To introduce how he came to found the organisation, he expressed, upon Adriana Marina's provocation, a powerful anecdote that highlights the jolting disparity in wealth distribution in Monterrey, Mexico — a trope that unfortunately, is not unique to the region. The city of San Pedro Garza García, crowned the wealthiest city in all of Latin America, is surrounded by rural areas where poverty is abject. . Whilst talking to a woman who worked

in the factory in the city, Rivera discovered that, in order to work, she had left her young child strapped to its beds with water and cereal, like a dog. This tragic routine is not an uncommon occurrence for women working in the workshops in the city.

Altitud's approach aims to help these women generate income from home, allowing them to financially support their families from their own homes. In alliance with Hecho por Nosotros, they run workshops, teaching the women about new technologies — such as, principally, how to use Zoom — and thus can undertake courses that train them to work professionally, from within their homes. This vision for the future, through fashion, they name as "Tejiendo el cambio" (weaving the change). In addition, Adriana then confirmed that the modern cycle of constantly changing styles, low quality clothes, not only supports but requires these appalling working conditions. Thus, collaborations such as these can help to forge the necessary system change.

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## Luisa Beatriz Muy Cuji

The next speaker was Ecuadorian artisan, Luisa Beatriz Muy Cuji. Her words gave us insight into the importance of the sharing of ancestral traditions, her own practice, having been taught to her by her mother. Her speech highlighted

the importance of promoting weaving as an occupation that can advocate for women's rights. For Muy Cuji, ancestral mediums allow us to be kinder to our planet, and should thus be promoted to the coming generations, allowing them to have this option in their work choices.

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## Tricia Langman

Next Tricia Langman, the Managing Partner and Leader of Educational-Technology/Sustainability strategist at Hecho por Nosotros explained the Toolkit that she and her team is currently creating; a platform that will empower artisans, entrepreneurs and designers all over the world. Focusing on education, as the cornerstone of what Hecho por Nosotros does, the toolkit stands as a primary educational initiative. The kit will serve to share knowledge about sustainable innovation, levelling the global playing field by granting the Global South access to sustainable resources and education.

This bilingual resource provides access to sustainable materials and educational courses tailored specifically for underserved communities, with a focus on women. The dynamic content is collaboratively created by a global team of academics, designers, and educators and includes interviews and webinars with industry leaders. The initiative features three main courses designed to equip participants with tools, workbooks, and indexes, fostering a global community of change-makers who would otherwise lack these resources.

Langman notes that what is central to Hecho por Nosotros's mission, is a commitment to innovation, encouraging entrepreneurs in the

Global South to explore natural, regenerative, and sustainable resources through design thinking. Participants will be encouraged to engage critically with technology while respecting local traditions and wisdom. A course on alternative materials introduces biomaterials and also includes an index tool for sourcing local natural resources. Additionally, the initiative

addresses circular economy principles; business models, labour standards, and human rights. It also proposes pathways for Indigenous communities to enter the value chain. Through these efforts hope to transform lives, through access to education that inspires individuals to thrive within their communities.

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## Romina de Giovanni and Jairo Caro

The next speakers were Romina de Giovanni and Jairo Caro, both partners of Hecho por Nosotros. Their presentation titled, “Empowering Artisans and SMEs with AI: Integrating Innovative Tools for Growth”, explored the possibilities of AI as a tool to empower artisans and enterprises, allowing them to make sustainable choices. AI’s capacity to turn data into insights promotes quick decision making, whilst its proficiency

with time-consuming tasks, reduces costs. Chatbots enhance customer satisfaction, as they immediately receive and respond to feedback. De Giovanni also highlighted the difficulties that can arise, integrating AI tools into the day-to-day systems of these enterprises. He also raised the ethical concerns — often sighted with regards to AI — regarding autonomous decision making, with which one must be proactively engaged to ensure AI technology is used correctly.

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## Gustavo Rincon

Gustavo Rincon, a collaborator with Hecho por Nosotros from Colombia, highlighted the importance of educational programmes for artisans and small businesses. He posits that educational programmes are an astute way of constructing the social and ecological message required, in the push towards sustainability.

## Andrea Alessandra Guevarra Pizarro

The next presenter was Andrea Alessandra Guevarra Pizarro, an Hecho por Nosotros collaborator pioneering the Youth for Youth campaign. Having recently been granted a scholarship to attend the Academy on Labour Migration in Turin, Italy, she shared some of the complex factors that migrants in the labour market are navigating: challenges to access social security, gender inequalities, and child labour within the textile industry. Fostering social inclusion requires not only the provision of support but also equipping both migrants and local communities with the necessary tools to effect meaningful change. This approach, promoted by Hecho por Nosotros, enables all individuals to better understand, advocate for, and uphold their rights, contributing to a more inclusive society.

## Vanesa Elizabeth Enriquez

Vanesa Elizabeth Enriquez, a collaborator with Hecho por Nosotros, highlighted the profound connection between traditional weaving practices and nature. Unlike the fast fashion industry, which prioritises speed and mass production at the expense of natural resources, the weaving process can take months or even years, emphasising patience, care, and sustainability. Hecho por Nosotros’ work delves into the semiotics and technology behind these practices, promoting circularity and respect for artisanal traditions. Young people play a crucial role in fostering a more conscious mindset, advocating for sustainable fashion that honours craftsmanship while safeguarding the environment.

## Ximena Mogrovejo

Ximena Mogrovejo, a textile designer based in the Andes of southern Ecuador, collaborates with artisans across the country, including those in the Amazon and Andes regions. Through her involvement with Hecho por Nosotros, she has helped establish a new model of textile residency that fosters deep collaboration between artisans and designers. This initiative emphasises the creation of textiles by artisans, for artisans, while building platforms for exchanging knowledge, not solely academic but also personal experiences with nature, fibres, and animals. Mogrovejo's vision is to establish a network that connects not only organisations, designers, and researchers, but also artisans, fostering community empowerment through shared experiences and horizontal learning.

## Lara Jovanovich

Lara Jovanovich, a collaborator with Hecho por Nosotros, critically examined the frameworks within which artisans and small producers operate, with a focus on transforming these systems to ensure long-term transparency and autonomy. Her work involved the development of a chapter identifying gaps in current certification systems, which often follow a top-down approach and fail to address underlying issues, instead fostering dependency on external entities. Jovanovich advocates for artisans to have the tools and autonomy to shape their own futures. She emphasises that systemic change is not linear, requiring an entire ecosystem to evolve, with active participation from grassroots movements. Her efforts are closely aligned with the UN and other key organisations that play a pivotal role in driving systemic change.

## Second panel:

### Intersection of technology, entrepreneurship and sustainability

#### Speakers:

- **Agustin Blacker**, Agricultural and Entrepreneurial expert
- **Juan Pablo García**, Associate at the Ganesha lab

#### Agustin Blacker

In the second panel on the "Intersection of Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability," Agustin Blacker, an agricultural and entrepreneurial expert, shared valuable insights on the future of sustainable food production and the role of technology in promoting longevity and environmental health. Defining longevity in the context of ageing populations, Blacker emphasised the need for institutions to address how the bodies of older generations respond to ageing and how society must adapt to these changes. Science, according to Blacker, offers a transformative approach to rethinking current methods of production, advocating for healthier and more environmentally friendly farming practices.

Blacker underscored the importance of integrating nature into the creation of new

food sources, highlighting the critical need to learn from and protect the natural environment. Biotechnology and the use of microbes to optimise plant and soil health were presented as essential tools to increase food production by up to 70% — a necessity in a world facing rapid population growth. He posed a vital question: should we continue with traditional methods, or ought we innovate by harnessing technology to enhance food production sustainably?

Entrepreneurs, particularly founders and start-ups, play a crucial role in driving industry innovations. They demonstrate the execution of technological solutions, confirming how sustainable farming practices can be achieved. Blacker emphasised the need for stronger collaboration between institutions, government, and private entities in order to achieve shared sustainability goals, consistently in the industry.

Blacker concluded that sustainability is the natural outcome when science is successfully applied to the market. The opportunities ahead are vast, but success will require collective efforts across sectors. The impact on longevity,

food security, and the health system could be profound if these innovations are pursued in concert with broader institutional support and governmental collaboration.

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## Juan Pablo García

Then, Juan Pablo García, an associate at The Ganesha Lab, discussed the role of venture capital and biotechnology in advancing sustainable practices across industries. The Ganesha Lab's mission is to bring biotechnological solutions from Latin America to a global scale, leveraging the region's rich biodiversity.

García noted that despite development in Latin America, he noted that the region still holds vast untapped potential. He highlighted how adversity can often be a catalyst for innovation, and that increasing consumer demand for sustainable practices, in tandem with stricter regulations, has pushed corporations to recognize the benefits of sustainability not only for the planet but also for their bottom line.

For young entrepreneurs, García offered key advice: ensure that your solutions are

addressing real industry needs. He noted that all too often, promising innovations for the planet and communities fail because they are not aligned with the actual demands of the market. Entrepreneurs should ask themselves, "Are you a solution looking for a problem, or are you solving an existing problem?" He stressed the importance of engaging with the industries where solutions are being applied to understand their specific challenges and nuances. By aligning sustainability efforts with the practical needs of corporations, entrepreneurs can create meaningful and lasting impact.

After the second panel, the floor was opened to the public for question time. Throughout this question time, the repeated trope was the importance of educating the youth, as it is they who can instigate real change, pushing the linear economy to the circular.

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# Conclusion

In her closing remarks, Adriana acknowledged the challenges that organisations are facing in embracing sustainability and the critical role individuals can play in becoming agents of change. She reiterated the importance of joint collaboration in driving systemic change, calling on everyone to work together toward a more sustainable future. She then extended a heartfelt thanks to all the speakers and urged participants to continue reflecting on the value of natural fibres, the art of traditional weaving, and the work of sustainable artisans.

She reminded the audience that while we have developed many tools to improve our lives, we have also grown increasingly distant from

nature. This disconnect is reflected in the fashion industry and our everyday choices, which mirror the world we live in today. Adriana encouraged the youth to embrace reality, highlighting Hecho por Nosotros as a platform that allows young people to transcend existing systems and co-create the world they deserve.

She concluded by stressing the need to reconnect with eco-values and principles that are both common and timeless. Within this ongoing transformation, Adriana invited everyone to not only witness change but to actively join it, becoming part of the movement toward a more sustainable and inclusive world.