AI as a Catalyst for Planetary Health and the Post-2030 Agenda

Revised Statement | October 2026 – Issued on behalf of the Planetary Health Alliance

The Timing

Humanity is living through a dangerous convergence: accelerating planetary disruption and a rapid expansion of artificial intelligence into how people learn, work, communicate, create, decide, and exercise agency. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource pressures, and widening inequities already threaten human wellbeing and the ecological foundations of life. AI can help societies understand and respond to these threats, but its mainstreaming also changes the conditions under which people think and act. If judgement, critical reflection, and responsibility are progressively delegated to machines, agency itself can erode. Planetary health in an AI-shaped world therefore depends on two capacities at once: keeping Earth systems within conditions that support life, and strengthening the human agency needed to choose and build healthier futures.

The Challenge

AI's impact extends beyond the outputs of individual tools to the infrastructures, incentives, behaviours, and institutions that surround them. Poorly governed use can deepen dependency, manipulation, disinformation, exclusion, and inequality; concentrate power; weaken social trust; and expose people and communities to new harms. AI also has a physical footprint across its lifecycle: energy and water demand, greenhouse-gas emissions, minerals and metals, land and infrastructure requirements, and electronic waste. These impacts vary by system, location, energy source, and use, and should be measured rather than assumed. The same technologies that can advance wellbeing and ecological resilience can also intensify pressures on people and planet. The central questions are therefore ones of purpose and governance: what should AI serve, who decides, and how do we keep meaningful human oversight and accountability as its capabilities grow?

The Opportunity

Aligned deliberately with planetary health, AI can strengthen early warning and risk assessment, support research and health systems, improve access to knowledge, enable more efficient use of resources, expand educational opportunity, and connect actors across sectors, disciplines, generations, and geographies. Its greatest value will come from complementing human intelligence, not replacing it. We seek hybrid intelligence in which artificial capabilities expand what people and institutions can understand and do while human judgement, values, relationships, contextual knowledge, and responsibility remain active. This requires double literacy: human literacy to understand the interdependence of self and society, people and planet, and algorithmic literacy to understand how digital systems influence perception, interaction, choice, and decision-making. Natural intelligence matters more than ever. It includes our physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual capacities, and how we use them in relation to ourselves, society, other people, and the planet. As AI becomes more capable, these deeply human forms of intelligence need to grow alongside it, so that we can exercise judgement, maintain agency, understand consequences, and decide what technology should serve.

Our Commitment

The Planetary Health Alliance (PHA), working through its AI Working Group and in partnership with member organisations and other partners, will strive to advance a practical ProSocial AI agenda for planetary health. Potential activities include:

- **Defining and embedding ProSocial AI:** We define ProSocial AI as the responsible design, governance, selection, and use of AI in ways that advance human agency, social cohesion, equity, and planetary health while anticipating harm and reducing ecological costs. PHA will embed this approach in its own AI-related work and promote it across planetary health research, education, policy, practice, and partnerships. Where system design lies outside PHA's direct control, we will engage developers, deployers, funders, policymakers, and users to advocate for these principles.
- **Re-centering AI on purpose and values:** We encourage institutions to begin with the outcomes AI should serve, not from technological capability alone. Adoption decisions should be guided by public value, human rights, intergenerational equity, planetary boundaries, and the needs and knowledge of affected communities, with

meaningful human oversight for consequential decisions. We see AI's primary pro-social purpose as securing the floor of human and ecological needs, starting with food, water, shelter, and environmental remediation; and strengthening human agency. The ambition of ProSocial AI is to serve in particular those who are presently excluded from technological progress.

- **Advancing practical safeguards and responsible-use guidance:** We propose a global working group, with partnership across settings to develop, adapt, and disseminate practical guidance for AI use in planetary health. Priorities include transparency and accountability, information integrity, privacy and data governance, intellectual property, bias and exclusion, safety, protection of children and vulnerable groups, clear routes for human review and redress, and further areas as the group deems fit.
- **Strengthening hybrid intelligence and double literacy:** With coalitions of PHA member organisations and educational partners, we will promote learning approaches that combine human and algorithmic literacy. The aim is to help people use AI critically and productively without surrendering judgement, curiosity, expertise, relationships, or responsibility, and to enable communities to participate meaningfully in decisions about technologies that affect them. For children and newcomers to AI, the priority should be to secure human attachment, critical thinking and values before intensive algorithmic exposure, so that people develop as independent thinkers before they engage with AI.
- **Drawing on faith, values and wisdom traditions**: Questions about what and who AI should serve are ultimately questions about meaning, dignity and responsibility. Faith and indigenous wisdom traditions can offer deep moral vocabularies for these questions, including around stewardship and trusteeship, restraint, care for the most vulnerable and obligations to future generations. Faith institutions and leaders also remain amongst the trusted pillars for many communities, particularly those furthest from where technology decisions are made. Building on the Sunway Faith Charter on Planetary Health and the subsequent Faith Toolkit, we will work with faith leaders, scholars, faith-based organisations and community leaders to bring these traditions and wisdom into deliberation on AI's purpose and governance. We will also support communities to engage AI with discernment rather than uncritical adoption or reflexive rejection and draw on their reach to build double literacy at the grassroots.
- **Making ecological costs visible:** We encourage credible lifecycle measurement and disclosure of AI's energy and water use, greenhouse gas emissions, minerals and materials demand, infrastructure and land pressures, and electronic waste. We support robust methodologies by relevant expert bodies and urge planetary health organisations to weight the benefits and the environmental opportunity costs of AI adoption.
- **Building an evidence-and-foresight function:** We will track emerging evidence on AI's benefits, harms, distributional effects, and implications for human agency and planetary health. This includes watching for weak signals and emerging threats, sharing lessons across the network, and turning evidence into timely action, favouring vigilance over unexplained optimism.
- **Demonstrating responsible practice:** With willing members and partners, we will identify, document, and evaluate AI applications that contribute to the Planetary Health Roadmap and Action Plan. Demonstrations should test not only whether an application works, but whom it benefits, what capacities or dependencies it creates, what resources it consumes, and whether it strengthens human and ecological resilience. Lessons will be shared for adaptation, not assumed to scale universally. We encourage the development of decentralized, local, offline models that do not depend entirely on energy-intensive centralised date centres.
- **Advocating for life-centred AI governance:** We will bring a planetary health perspective to national and international AI policy discussions, including emerging post-2030 frameworks. We will advocate for governance that protects human rights and agency, narrows digital and AI divides, makes environmental impacts visible, preserves meaningful human oversight, and constrains uses that undermine human or planetary security. PHA's contribution is to connect health, ecological, social, and technological governance, which are too often treated separately. This reflects the Global Tipping Points Kuala Lumpur Declaration's commitment to "choose AI to serve life".

A Call to Action for the Post-2030 Agenda

As the 2030 horizon of the Sustainable Development Goals approaches, AI can no longer be treated as a separate technology agenda. It is becoming part of the operating environment for health, education, economies, public institutions, information systems, and environmental action. The post-2030 agenda should reflect this, linking digital governance with

human development and Earth-system stewardship, and judging technological progress by whether it enables people and planet to flourish together.

PHA's network and convening role can help build that bridge: bringing planetary health evidence into AI debates; bringing planetary health evidence into AI debates and AI's opportunities and risks into planetary health practice; supporting education and responsible-use guidance; and contributing to policy agendas and multi-stakeholder coalitions. This work should involve scientists and health professionals, governments and businesses, educators and civil society, technology developers and affected communities, as well as ethical, cultural, Indigenous, faith, and wisdom traditions that can widen the conversation about what progress is for.

Our aim is practical and demanding: to shift AI from a predominantly technology-centred trajectory towards life-centred development and governance. Pro-Social AI offers a compass for that shift. Its test is not how much intelligence machines can display, but whether the combined human and AI systems we create strengthen agency, equity, social cohesion, resilience, and the living systems on which every future depends.

Context note (2026): This revision reflects the emerging international emphasis on human oversight, inclusive and risk-based AI governance, capacity-building, and environmental accountability, including the UN Global Digital Compact and current evidence on general-purpose AI risks and AI lifecycle impacts.

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