

# FAIRPHONE

## Fairphone to upgrade 5-year-old Fairphone 2 to Android 9

### Press Release

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*After just 5 years in service Fairphone 2 is now one of the few Android smartphones released in 2015 to still receive continued software support. This means roughly 1.1 billion Android phones sold in 2015 alone ([source Gartner](#)) are now unusable, adding to global e-waste, environmental pollution, and emissions that keep growing.*

**Amsterdam, 16.06.2020** - Fairphone announced today that it is working to release a software upgrade to Android 9 for its Fairphone 2. The Fairphone 2 was released in 2015 and is one of the few Android smartphones sold in that year to still receive continued software support. Fairphone 2 was initially released with Android 5 and has already received upgrades to Android 6 and Android 7.1. Fairphone is pleased to announce today a beta version of Android 9 available on Fairphone 2.

The focus on releasing new products every year, which have a short lifespan, is common in the technology sector. In contrast, Fairphone's ambition is to make phones that last as long as possible. Fairphone innovates to save valuable resources and emissions and through fairer material supply chains. In 2019 it launched Fairphone 3, which builds on the same design and fairness principles as the Fairphone 2. Just like the Fairphone 2, the Fairphone 3 will also receive long-term software support. An essential part of the longevity of a device is connected to the continued software and security support of phones. Unsupported devices will stop working properly after a while and are a security risk for users, even if they are technically functional.

Fairphone commences today public testing of the Android 9 upgrade for the Fairphone 2, rolling out the first beta version. Upgrading phones to higher Android versions without chipset vendor support is more difficult and success is not guaranteed from the start. The next step after the public testing will be the Google certification.

#### The long and winding road to Android 9

The road to Android 9 for Fairphone 2 has been complicated so far. Android is released by Google through the Android Open Source Project (AOSP). The chipset vendor, in Fairphone's case Qualcomm, takes the source code of an Android version from AOSP and modifies it. Then a company like Fairphone takes the modified code from Qualcomm and completes it, delivering the Android release. However, from Android 7, Qualcomm stopped supporting the chipset in the Fairphone 2 (the Snapdragon 801). Nevertheless, in the

past, Fairphone has already upgraded Fairphone 2 to Android 7.1 without chipset vendor support. This made Fairphone 2 the only smartphone with a Snapdragon 801 chipset to receive this upgrade. It will also be the only one to receive an upgrade to Android 9.

As a result, Fairphone had to build the operating system without any support from Qualcomm. For help with Android 7, Fairphone chose to use the community-built LineageOS, a community driven Android, to help construct the operating system. Although they gave Fairphone a complete system, it wasn't ready to be released according to the device manufacturer's requirements, so adjustments were made. For Android 9, Fairphone again lacked Qualcomm support. However, this time, Fairphone took into account the challenges experienced with Android 7 and wanted to build - with help from the community once again - the system itself from the ground up, allowing full control throughout the difficult process.

Technology: Innovation at the expense of the environment

After just 5 years in service, this will make Fairphone 2 one of the few Android smartphones to still receive software support compared to any other Android device released in 2015.

The short life cycles of smartphones, the difficulty of repair and the limited software support for smartphones add to growing e-waste worldwide. As most emissions are caused during the production of a smartphone it also contributes to growing greenhouse gas emissions.

Miquel Ballester, Fairphone's Design Lead comments: "The focus on releasing new products every year, which have a short lifespan, is common in the technology sector. There is a flip side to the way the electronics industry innovates. The focus on the yearly 'disruption' of technology does not just bring innovative ideas to the market, almost at the same speed 'old' technology is going obsolete. This has left a trail of e-waste and is bad for the planet and people."

Fairphone has also started the development of Android 10 for its Fairphone 3, which it aims to release later this year.

Note to the editor

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About Fairphone

Fairphone is building a market for ethical phones and motivating the industry to act more responsibly. We design, produce and sell smartphones to uncover the supply chain behind our products, raise awareness for the most urgent issues, and prove that it's possible to do things differently. Together with our partners and collaborators, we're working to make caring for people and the planet a natural part of doing business.

Photos, videos, fact sheets and other materials are available at the Fairphone press page: <https://fairphone.com/en/about/press/>  
[www.fairphone.com](http://www.fairphone.com)

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