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Android Kernel Support for Device Longevity

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In pursuit of a stronger defense against kernel security issues, the Android ecosystem has been evolving since 2017 to more aggressively follow the upstream stable kernels. To support this evolution, the Android Common Kernel has been transformed from a reference kernel used primarily to cherry-pick features and security bug fixes into a binary release of a kernel that is kept up-to-date with the latest stable kernel releases and heavily tested by the entire Android community.

Now, there is an increasing emphasis on sustainability and reuse that has resulted in a need to prolong the support lifetimes of Android devices. This was underscored last year by the EU with the Ecodesign spec that requires phones and tablets to continue to receive feature and security updates for more than 5 years after they are purchased. We now see devices being sold with the promise of 7 or more years of updates. Even the 6-year support lifetime of some recent stable kernels are not long enough for modern devices which must now outlive the kernel that they launch with.

In this session we will discuss the next evolution of Android kernel support in the Android ecosystem to support device longevity.

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