



## Season 3, Episode 1 – Environmental & Corporate Law

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#### **Stacie Berdan:**

Welcome to the global careers podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER – THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host! In season three, we explore the rising trend of ESG and how it is shifting the talent landscape on a global scale. Come with us as we share with you how responsible active engagement is changing the face of the global workforce today. Today I have the pleasure of interviewing Rosalind Kainyah – a lawyer, global thinker and speaker, and a thought leader and advocate in the sustainability ESG space. She is a trusted adviser to boards and senior executives of global companies on responsible business investment and partnerships. She is also an experienced professional Non-Executive Director chairing sustainability, nominations, remuneration, and governance board committees. In this advisory role, Rosalind ensures that companies have positive socio-economic impacts on the countries in which they operate, while realizing optimal financial value. Rosalind was honored with the 2021 Women Who Make a Difference award by the International Women's Forum. And today she's coming to us from the UK. Welcome, Rosalind. It's such a pleasure to have you with us.

#### **Rosalind Kainyah:**

Stacie, thank you so much for inviting me to be part of the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast series. Thank you very much.

#### **Stacie Berdan:**

One of the objectives of this podcast is to provide a sense of the careers that are out there – you know, more than the titles and the job description. You were both a corporate lawyer and an environmental lawyer, and you've worked across Africa and a number of other countries. Tell us about your career?

#### **Rosalind Kainyah:**

Well, first thing I'll say is that I might sound like I've always had it all together. But I can assure you that it hasn't always been this way. And for that reason, I'll have to significantly concertina my career, because we don't have enough time to go down all the different paths I took. But I like to think of my career as a tapestry with lots of different colored threads, and with others lending me their hands and their time to work on the tapestry with me – family, friends, colleagues, coaches, and sponsors. Most of the time, I was looking at the back of the tapestry, and I have to admit that it's only in the last 10 years or so that I have spent more time in front, looking at what has been woven and what has been moving. So, I'll say the first thread was when I was nine years old, watching the lawyer Perry Mason on black and white TV in Ghana, saving the wrongfully accused and bringing the criminal to justice. I knew from them that I wanted to do the same to become a lawyer who rights wrongs. But at the same time, a thread of a different but complementary color was being included – my love for literature and history. And I'd like to tell a little story that I'm not sure my mother knows. But after my A levels, which is well, the end of high school, I guess, in the US, my parents wanted me to come to university in the UK to study law. But I wanted to stand in Ghana and



go to the same university as most of my good friends. So I never filled out the necessary forms. Not sure how I got away with it, but I did. And I'm glad I did. So I read English and History at the University of Ghana, three glorious years. And then I came over to the UK to study law. Now, I didn't plan in the traditional sense to become an environmental lawyer, which is what I was, was for quite a number of years. But when the idea was first mentioned to me by someone I sought career advice from, it just felt right. It was all about justice for our natural environment, for people, which is where I tend to focus, and doing business transparently and with integrity and accountability. The E, S, and G pillars of sustainability, which I'll come to later. So, I began that journey in the early 1990s, starting with international environmental law as one of my master's courses, and then going on to work on environmental law and policy in Kenya and South Africa. And then went on to become an environmental lawyer in business working for an Anglo-American corporation in South Africa. And following on for the same thread, I moved on to work for global environmental consultancy ERM and then Linklaters, the international law firm. ERM gave me the opportunity to work on projects in parts of the world that I don't think I'd ever have visited but for them, particularly in Eastern Europe; and with all that's going on now between the war within Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine was one of those lovely countries that I visited, as well as Albania, Bulgaria, and Azerbaijan, and other countries in Africa that I hadn't been to previously. Then at Linklaters, a different color thread was introduced. I went in as an environmental lawyer but was asked to do a three month stint in the corporate law department – to make sure that my environmental law advice was really relevant to the companies we're advising. That three months turned into two years, but two very important years for me. They were the foundations for me to focus on the business case for sustainability. Moving on from Linklaters, I then went on to work for DeBeers, the diamond company. And I'll just add that I was at DeBeers for seven years, seven very important years. And I knew whilst I was there, I was asked very often why would you work for a company, which had what people would describe as politely such a colorful history. And it did have a colorful history, right, and not so bright. But the one thing I realized whilst I was at DeBeers was that the business was literally a lifeline for education, health, jobs, and the dignity of work for millions across Southern Africa. I once said to someone that it's easy to be on the outside shouting in, rather than inside contributing to ensuring that a business does what is right always. So, at DeBeers I went in as a corporate commercial lawyer, and I came out as a senior executive with my first board position, and also responsible for setting up DeBeers' US representative office. What I loved about DeBeers is that it took me down into the mines, sat me with communities, brought me before political leaders and significant business leaders around the world, including in the UK. I'll go so far as to say that is the centerpiece of my career tapestry. From DeBeers, I took up a position with Tullow Oil. It was bittersweet leaving DeBeers, but the pull of Tullow Oil was that they had found oil in Ghana, which was my home country, and therefore, wanting to be a part of a company that we very much hoped would bring prosperity to the country, as well as to the company at the same time. I was at Tullow Oil for four years, then decided that I wanted to use all my learnings to help a largest selection of companies. So, I started the other thread in my career, more fragile, because I was starting off on my own, which was setting up my advisory firm Kina Advisory – that was eight and a half years ago. And I have more recently, I guess, added – I don't think it's the final thread – but another thread to my career to this wonderful tapestry – I sit on boards of companies as a Non-Executive Director. So that's a quick race through a career over quite a few decades.

**Stacie Berdan:**

So it's terrific, Rosalind, what an amazing career you have had. And I particularly like the point that you can really be inside a company to actually really make a difference. And that seems to be where ESG and sustainability is leading these days. It's not just the outsiders saying you must do this. But corporations and organizations around the world are doing it from the inside. So... But for the benefit of our listeners, can you define for us what sustainability is and how ESG plays a role in all of that?

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

Fortunately, we have a definition from 1987 that has stood the test of time. This was from the UN Brundtland Commission report Our Common Future. And sustainability is meeting our own present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And environmental, social, and



governance, which is often interchanged with sustainability, are really the three central pillars for measuring sustainability, particularly for businesses. I define these three pillars, very simply. Environmental means taking care of your physical surroundings and the natural environment. Social is taking care of your people, those impacted by your business. And Stacy, I talk always in a business context here. So those are local communities, your employees, suppliers and your customers. And governance is doing business efficiently and with integrity. It's how your company polices itself with the focus on leadership, diversity, your internal controls and audits, etc.

**Stacie Berdan:**

That's great and wonderfully clear, because in different places around the world ESG has been growing at different rates, right. I mean, in the US, I think we're probably lagging a little bit behind Europe for sure. So, depending on the geography, the industry, the organization seems to be slightly different. What's your take on that?

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

No, quite right. And I have seen and been involved in the sustainability journey from being just a nice to have, but not central to the way in which a business operates, through to it being a risk management and compliance too, focused on what went wrong and how we fix it. And I think is now on its way to value creation contributing to the, what I call, the dollar bottom line. And I think, more recently, a number of factors and trends that have moved the sustainability train up the tracks. In more recent times, we see that the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, racial and social justice movements, and the climate related crisis have sparked a global reckoning. And businesses are now expected to play a more significant role in the chain that is required. And we're reading also, hearing a lot about what we call sustainable investments – investments that have criteria, environmental, social, and governance criteria. They're basically outperforming other funds, we're seeing a lot of that happening. Therefore investors themselves are looking at investments where they assure that the environment will be properly managed, people be properly looked after, and businesses operate with integrity. But I think, maybe even more important, that the trend has been spurred on by younger generations. And we're seeing studies that show that millennials and Generation Z are both driving current investing in ESG and impact investment. And they're more likely to be interested in making an impact with their investment decisions than older generations. But, around the world, as you rightly say, the US lagging a little bit behind Europe, we're seeing quite a bit of that. Research has shown that European companies are almost 50% more likely to have identified a UN Sustainable Development Goal on climate change as an objective of their business, more than US companies. Only 25% of American companies have outlined this as a priority. I focused quite a bit on Africa. And there also, there is definitely a lag behind. But for different reasons, the economic and social development needs of African countries are very different from the developed world. And just on Saturday, I was speaking to a group of women leaders in Ghana on sustainability. And as much as they really appreciate the importance of sustainability, they were mentioning to me that, you know, our young people coming out of university, their major concern is what jobs do we have, let alone what decent jobs do we have. So, when you talk to them about the UN Sustainable Development Goals or sustainable investment, that seems a bit of a far cry for them. We have Latin America and other developing countries also lagging behind Europe. But I think on the whole the move is forward. And I think the move has to be tailored to every geography, I would dare say every country, to see what best suits them. One thing I'll add is that even though formally sustainability in Africa might seem to be behind, I find it interesting that more people in African countries need sustainable lives, in terms of what they eat, their use of energy, their use of transportation... I would say their lifestyle is far more sustainable than a lot of the lifestyles in the developed world.

**Stacie Berdan:**

So much to unpack there, I mean that point is interesting... The point about the financial investors and this new generation. So, since our podcast is focused on students, recent graduates, what do they need to know? Right? So this podcast is brought to us by GW-CIBER, so it's in Washington, DC, its students, mostly in the business school, are leaders of tomorrow. So, what tips do you have for those who maybe want to incorporate it into their career or maybe even pursue it as a career? Is that possible?



### **Rosalind Kainyah:**

Well, Stacey, I'm so glad you asked whether it's possible to pursue sustainability as a career, one would say it must be, because there are roles with titles like Head of Sustainability, Vice President for Sustainability, etc. But I'd like to be a little contrary here and say, bearing in mind the definition of sustainability, shouldn't we all be pursuing careers that encompass sustainability – meeting our own present needs, whilst ensuring that we do not compromise the ability of the students that we're talking about, and children and grandchildren later down the line? So shouldn't sustainability be an integral part of all we do? And I always find it difficult to answer that question very simply, as I said, I'm a lawyer by background, in my career I've only done one sustainability subject – that was international law - as a topic of my Master's. Everything else has been... I have really had a mindset of sustainability in whatever I do. I'll give an example. I had a very interesting discussion with an executive who was responsible for mergers and acquisitions of a company that makes electronic components, and one of the main reasons (I'm on the Board of the company) I was attracted to the company is because the core business strategy of that company is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They use those goals to determine which sectors they should provide components for. So it was renewable energy, it was health, it was transportation, but very much transportation of the future... And then industrial connectivity. And it was interesting to note that there's no Head of sustainability in that company. But everyone in that company has this in mind. So, I will say, for me, it doesn't matter which career you're pursuing. What is important is that you, you bear in mind, that sustainability is a goal that we all need to achieve and drive to, and make it an integral part of whatever career you take up. But having said so, there are also technical aspects to sustainability. So, for example, in the environmental field, you could be a generalist environmental scientist, for example, or somebody a specialist as a noise engineer. For talking more on the business front, there's quite a great demand for analysts, strategists, and others who are knowledgeable about ESG issues. The demand for ESG experts is booming across professional services. But my advice is before you move from business school to become an environmental advisor, if you can work within a business to really understand the business' challenges. Otherwise, you can become quite insular – all you're doing is providing this advice. You're not taking into account the other tensions within the business, whether it has projects that it needs to meet on schedule and within budget, the operational needs of the business. And I think it's so important to go in understanding a business and then be able to provide whatever sustainability advice and support you're able to give against that backdrop.

### **Stacie Berdan:**

That's great advice. Context is what you're saying, context is necessary for doing this, and, and that's great advice for all people starting out in their career, really understanding the business. What are some of the other skills and expertise? So that's a great discussion for us to kind of lead onto the next topic of what kinds of skills are necessary for a global career.

### **Rosalind Kainyah:**

First and foremost, I'll say cross-cultural communication skills. And that's not just about the speaking, but it's about the understanding of whichever geography, whether it's a country or community, in which we find ourselves in any function. International Business means working with people from a different country, or a different background. So it could be, you know, you could be in your home country, but having to work with a broad base of international people. It requires an open mind and, I would say often, international research. And if I could give an example – I was advising a company whose CEO was going into a particular African country for the very first time. And it was very interesting, because he said: Do you have any history books on this country that I could read? And I thought, yes, I do! And it was so important, because the history of this particular country really informed the politics of today. So I gave him a list of about six books. He actually, I think, read most of them because he keeps on referencing them to other people. But it really helped him understand the politics of the country, and which influences the business in that country. So I think it's important to make an effort to learn, understand, and appreciate the cultural differences and nuances of wherever we find ourselves or in whatever group we find ourselves. I'll say a second skill is networking abilities. This is now a must. And I know it's daunting for introverts.



But I've learned that networking doesn't mean being the life and soul of the party and talking to everyone at a party. It's more about quality than quantity. You know, I'm often described as being well connected and knowing "everyone". I can assure you that I don't know everyone, but I know at least one person who does know everyone. And I think that is the skill – is just making sure that you've got good quality contacts, few is best, but the quality is most important. And then, I'll say a third skill is collaboration. The ability to collaborate and work together for a common purpose is fundamental when it comes to working in the global environment. And it requires humility, allowing others to take the lead and share credit for success. It also requires confidence to tackle problems and to be able to give and receive feedback, and respectfully fight your cause if you have a cause to fight. And then, finally, I'll say interpersonal influence – the ability to influence others is fundamental. And particularly on my sustainability journey, being able to influence others to see the import of sustainability has been very important. And the best sustainability or ESG professionals gain influence by developing good professional relationships and building respect, communicating, networking, and collaboration can all culminate in this sort of influence.

**Stacie Berdan:**

I'd like to turn to your background. So you were born in the UK raised and educated in Ghana, back to the UK, stints in Kenya, South Africa, the US... What has that been like for you – personally and professionally?

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

Obviously, I feel totally blessed I've had such a rich experience. There have been challenges along the way. But I look back now and say I wouldn't change a single one of them. First of all, that experience has given me a network of friends and contacts that are totally priceless. People who have helped me along my career way, very important, and also just helped me build a business that I can go to for support and advice or even for advice and giving advice to others. I think that's very important. The other thing it's given me is a real sense of perspective, a real sense of learning from others, taking bits from different parts of the world, different people, groups that I've met, different individuals. And that has enriched the insights that I'm able to pass on to others, whether it's advising companies or mentoring young people.... but really critical, I think, that variety of insights. I also think it has given me what I call Global wisdom. I, at the moment, live in a very almost rural area in Oxfordshire and England, but I sort of have within me such a global expanse, that it really doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter where you find yourself. That sort of global richness always follows you and always informs your behaviors, what you say your relationships. I've also learned to respect people. And, above all, I think I've learned to value myself too, because other people, you know, other people from different places have held mirrors up to me showing me different aspects of me, because in different cultures, and in different countries, certain parts of you become more important and prominent. And I have found that people, as I've traveled around, people have held mirrors up to different parts of me. So it's enabled me to value myself more.

**Stacie Berdan:**

That's lovely. You described a wonderful experience and saying that you wouldn't have changed anything, but I can't believe it's all been absolutely perfect with no challenges, right? I mean, so many people think a global career is so glamorous and wonderful, but it's pretty challenging. Do you have a challenge or an experience that you'd like to share? One that'll show or illustrate some points for our listeners?

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

Yes, I'll tell you what, it was a big challenge for me. I was born in the UK, but brought up in Ghana. That's where I did my schooling up to my first degree before I came back to the UK. I then had a stint of two years in South Africa. And that was two years immediately after the apartheid regime was over. So I went over to South Africa, I was involved in helping with reviewing the environmental legislation in that country. Now, for me, I had been brought up in Ghana, and I say this, I was in a country of people like me completely. I came to the UK, I was here for quite a while, but because I had such a strong foundation in who I was, because of where I had been brought up.



When I faced racism here in the UK, I didn't recognize it. Okay, I mean, it was a sad case. But I just thought people were being idiots. It never occurred to me that it was because of the color of my skin or because I was a woman. So, I go to South Africa for two years where racism in its worst form had raged. And for me, because it was so easy for me to interact with people of whatever race or color, I didn't fully appreciate what the black South Africans had gone through. And I didn't fully appreciate the need to be more empathetic, more sensitive to how they saw the way they were treated. And I remember once being told by someone that "you don't seem to interact a lot with us black South Africans, you seem to easily have a lot of white friends". And I thought: Oh, my goodness, it had never occurred to me that I need to bear in mind where I am. And yes, there was absolutely nothing wrong with me having a variety of friends and great friends. But I needed to be a lot more sensitive to the country in which I had come to live and work. And it was quite a challenge for me because it meant that a lot of people I was working with a lot of the black South Africans I was working with, didn't actually take to me very well to start with, but I took advice from this older woman and it did take a time to be a lot more intentional and purposeful about how I was behaving and how I behave towards everybody. So I think that was quite a lesson and quite a challenge for me, because I was quite a happy go lucky person. I mean I still am and was, but it just meant I had to be more intentional.

**Stacie Berdan:**

That's a great story, thank you very much for sharing, it's really illustrative of how we really do have to pay attention to who we are, what we're doing and where we are – makes a big difference. That's wonderful. Great. So, Rosalind, before we wrap up, is there anything else that you want to add?

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

I think something that I just learned recently, and because I'm speaking to students who are about to go out into an uncertain world, people ask me what keeps me going and I always say it's grit and grace. And grit being the hard work that one has to do, being the best one can be at whatever one is given. And Grace is the support of others, you know, really reaching out and asking for help when it's needed, recognizing that no single one of us knows everything, and really reaching out for support. And I think for me, at this stage in my career, I want to be a lot of that grace to other young people. But I think for all of us, it's all about grit and grace.

**Stacie Berdan:**

That's wonderful, great advice. And on that note, thank you. Thank you so much, Rosalind, for taking the time to share your brilliant career, practical tips with our listeners. Your career has been fascinating, actually could talk to you all day long. But unfortunately, time is up and I really appreciate taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Thanks.

**Rosalind Kainyah:**

Thank you very much Stacie.

[Music]

**Stacie Berdan:**

You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!