

Best Sustainable Finance & ESG Advisory CEO 2025 (London): Maria Lombardo

RO-SE Global, that stands for Resilient Organisations for Sustainable Economics, is a London-based sustainability advisory firm aiming to bridge the critical gap between corporate and financial institutions. Working with corporations, sovereign wealth funds, and financial institutions, the firm transforms sustainability from a compliance burden into a strategic advantage. At the heart of this mission is Founder and CEO Maria Lombardo, whose expertise has shaped the firm into an emerging leader in its inaugural year. We heard more from Maria below, as she is named in the Female CEO of the Year Awards 2025.

Maria Lombardo took a giant leap of faith last year, leaving the security of her banking job to pursue her vision. In 2025, she founded RO-SE, a firm built on a foundation of expert partnerships, designed to help corporate and financial institutions speak the same language on sustainability. The firm translates conversations between the two worlds, leveraging a unique model that combines a curated network of specialist partners with bespoke, action-oriented advisory services.

Within just two months of founding RO-SE, Maria established an international network of ten core institutional partners and assembled an advisory board of distinguished industry leaders. "Building RO-SE from concept to operational reality in a very short period of time stands as my defining achievement," she said. "I consider this my legacy work, and something that came at a stage of my career when people usually start thinking about their pension."

RO-SE is the second company Maria has launched, following Lumar Partners, an independent advisory firm specialising in capital introductions and strategic communications. Maria has taken on a full-time commitment with RO-SE, drawing inspiration from her tenure at Standard Chartered Bank; as Global Head of ESG Advisory, she built a successful practice from the ground up, delivering sustainability

focused projects in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Maria's career spans more than three decades in emerging market equities, investment banking, and sustainability. She has held senior roles at leading institutions including Invesco Global Asset Management, CDP, UniCredit, Sberbank, UBS, British International Investment (formerly CDC) and Lazard. This new chapter of RO-SE represents the culmination of Maria's experience, combining strategic insight with a commitment to advancing sustainable finance across global markets.

"Every role has taught me something essential," Maria told us. "When I give a quick definition of what I bring to the table with my experience, I always say that my journey from equity sales in emerging markets to ESG leadership has provided me with a unique perspective; I can understand both sides of the equation – what investors need and what companies can deliver. This dual lens is also essential for RO-SE's mission."

Across her extensive career, Maria has learned the power of building her expertise deeply and using it to create bridges with a 360 degree prospective. Rather than adapting to existing structures, she opts to create new ones that reflect her core values. RO-SE embodies this mission exactly through its partnership model, bringing together diverse expertise to solve complex challenges.

The firm is designed to be bigger than any individual, including Maria herself, with an unwavering team spirit driving every partnership built and every project delivered.

Maria's values are rooted in family history, a legacy she continues to uphold. "RO-SE is a love letter to my grandmother," she shared. "She ran a sartorial business, listening to clients, bringing in the right craftspeople, delivering solutions that fit perfectly. We do the same thing, just with sustainability and finance instead of fabric. Our philosophy of 'craftsmanship, partnership, and bespoke solutions' is deeply personal, indeed inspired by my grandmother's sartorial business legacy."

Ultimately, Maria aspires to establish RO-SE as the go-to partner for organisations navigating the sustainability-to-bankability gap in emerging markets. The team are currently working on expanding the firm's client reach and partner network strategically, focusing on regions where RO-SE can create maximum impact, particularly in underserved markets.

The next few months will be pivotal for RO-SE, as the firm strengthens its capabilities and proof-of-concept while preparing key areas of the business that promise opportunities for scaling. RO-SE will formalise its delivery methodology, develop sector-specific transition



toolkits, and scale its AI-enabled implementation tools, with growing excitement surrounding its expanding pipeline in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, as well as its investment readiness service designed for innovative climate companies.

As for Maria's future plans, the CEO stated: "I could have stayed comfortable as an employee until retirement, but comfortable isn't my style. My goal? In five years, I want RO-SE to be the model others take as best practice. I want to leave something good that my children can feel proud of."

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