



Asia's Top 15 ESG Law Firms: A conversation with Ogier

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Asian Legal Business (ALB) ranked Ogier as one of Asia's Top 15 ESG Law Firms 2023. This interview with Head of ESG (Legal) Kate Hodson, and Director, Head of Sustainable Investment Consulting Leonie Kelly, and Ogier's Head of Sustainability, Andrea Leung, first appeared in ALB's March 2023 edition.

Can you discuss the types of services your firm offers to help clients meet their ESG goals and objectives?

Ogier has a three-pronged approach to sustainability and ESG. Firstly, we look at our own D&I and environmental performance and that helps to ensure we can be a credible partner for our clients who also have ESG goals and objectives. To ensure our journey is 'expert led', our Head of Sustainability oversees our processes and has developed a management system using ISO 14001 Standard as a framework. We have committed to SBTi and to acquire net-zero membership from the Net Zero Lawyers Alliance. We also have a number of active projects on the D&I front and have published our gender pay gap report.

In terms of legal services, we were the first (amongst the offshore firms) to establish a dedicated Sustainable Investing and Impact Funds practice and this remains a key area for us. However, our ESG related transactions continue to grow and we have been working on green bond offerings, social bonds, sustainability linked notes and loans and so on. We continue to develop our legal services to ensure we are able to provide tailored legal advice within the context of sustainable investing and ESG.

Our legal practice is also uniquely supported by Ogier Global's Sustainable Investment (SI) Consulting team which supports clients with design, integration and management of ESG and impact strategies.

How does your firm assist clients in understanding and navigating the various issues and guidelines related to ESG issues?

Thought leadership is key and we do this through written content and speaking at educational events. Of course we also advise clients directly on ESG matters. Regulation has been in sharp focus in 2022 and we have supported clients with navigating the EU Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulations, the EU Taxonomy and aligning to frameworks such as TCFD and UN PRI.

Of course, one key component of “ESG” is that of governance and that is an area that is very relevant to the work we are doing in all our jurisdictions, particularly in our corporate, private wealth and funds service-lines.

Can you provide examples of how your firm has helped clients develop and implement sustainability strategies, such as reducing their carbon emissions or increasing their use of renewable energy?

As a member, we work with the Net Zero Lawyers Alliance on industry best practices. In addition, our Head Of Sustainability has recently volunteered to be part of a working group developing climate friendly business travel policy for law firms. Another example is that in the Cayman Islands Ogier is now part of (together with a large number of Cayman law firms) the ESG Working Group for the Chancery Lane Project, a collaborative initiative of international legal and industry professionals whose vision is a world where every contract enables solutions to climate change.

Access to renewable energy is one of the biggest challenges faced by our offices in the Caribbean, even though the region has great potential in relation to solar, tidal and wind energy. We hope to explore collaboration to accelerate local renewable energy development in the region.

Our SI consultancy also specifically works with asset owners, asset managers and institutional investor clients, helping them design and build sustainability strategies aligned to their portfolio goals - this typically involves building their governance, investment and risk management processes and disclosures procedures to implement and manage climate-related risks and wider ESG risks (including carbon emissions and other factors).

How does your firm collaborate with clients to ensure ESG considerations are integrated into their business operations and decision-making processes?

There are a number of areas where we can support. As mentioned, this is a key area of focus for

Ogier Global's SI Consulting practice. But we also have learning tools such as Ogier's ESG Align and bespoke training that we offer to clients to ensure boards and senior management are aware of the risks and how such integration can be carried out.

Can you discuss the role your firm plays in advising clients on ESG-related risk management and how you help them identify and address potential ESG-related challenges and opportunities?

Advising on regulation has been a key area for us. However, even where regulation is not currently the driver we can be in a position to spot ESG risks which we can bring to a client's attention. For example, in the context of a fund launch we might point out green washing risks in terms of the naming of the fund or the use of certain terms. SI Consulting also helps clients identify key dimensions of risk and opportunities, measuring portfolio exposure and impact, assessing portfolio vulnerability to different climate scenarios and so on. Many of the processes adopted are built around a TCFD framework where we set governance, strategy and risk management processes and put targets/metrics in place.

About Ogier

Ogier is a professional services firm with the knowledge and expertise to handle the most demanding and complex transactions and provide expert, efficient and cost-effective services to all our clients. We regularly win awards for the quality of our client service, our work and our people.

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