

Podcast

by Ilham Kadri

AND is the Future



Progress beyond



EPISODE 5 | Circular economy: good for people, planet AND profit

with Dame Ellen MacArthur



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Ilham Kadri: Today I am thrilled to be speaking to Dame Ellen MacArthur, who has the most incredible life story, which inspires many of us. Because she's a role model. She's inspiring many young women and less young women like me. At the age of 24, she became the youngest person to sail around the world solo, coming in second in the Vendée Globe race. And in 2005, she reached her goal of breaking the world record for the fastest solo sail around the world. For her incredible achievements, she was named a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. After breaking the world record, she decided to retire from sailing to begin an even bigger race. She is now leading the charge to accelerate this transition to a circular economy through the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Ellen, thank you so much for being here today.

Ellen MacArthur: Thank you for having me.

Life as a professional sailor

Ilham Kadri: So glad to see you again, Ellen. And most of this podcast, Ellen will be focused on your work, recent work on the circular economy. Nobody expected it probably, that a sailor, adventurer, will come to circular economy. But before we get there, I'm so curious about your life on the ocean. And I watched again and again a few clips of footage from one of your journeys around the world on YouTube. And I shared it with my team. I've seen you cry and obviously after laughing and celebrating, and that moment Ellen was so profound, so human centric, and I understood something very special and precious for any leader is about determination, resilience, vulnerability is okay, it's part of who you are. And I've seen you later in that journey obviously facing incredible challenges from climbing the mast to fix your sail in a storm in the Southern Ocean to running on days without sleep and narrowly missing an iceberg. So tell me more about that and the leadership or probably just simply the human you know, lessons out of this.

Ellen MacArthur: Thanks, Ilham. I don't think it feels like leadership, you know at the time you're in survival mode. My whole life, well, from the age of four, my dream had been to sail around the world, I wanted to be a sailor. I wanted to sail around the world. And when I was out there on that record and the Vendée Globe before that, you know, you are out there in the middle of an ocean, doing what you really wanted to do. So you're driven not by leadership, but by your heart and your goal, and your dreams, you know, that's what I wanted to do. I felt like the luckiest person on earth to be out there, you know, living that dream, it was incredibly unlikely for me to do that, and yet I managed to make it happen. So that's the first thing you're not there because of leadership, you're there because you're absolutely following a passion, and almost you have your blinker,

you know, that's the one thing you want to do. But then why do you get into that situation? It's hard to describe, but you know if I said to you now go off and find everything that you needed for your survival for the next three months and then get on a boat and go. And what you have is all you have, there will be no more, you know, you have to manage what you have, you have to keep the boat sailing, that's 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There's no downtime really. Or if there is, you never know it's coming. If there's a storm, there is no downtime. And you live in a completely different world. And if the weather dictates that you can't sleep, you can't sleep. And those moments where you're absolutely broken are incredibly hard. And actually the easiest thing would be not to film it because you don't want to film yourself in that situation. But when I left,

Ilham Kadri: Absolutely, yeah.

Ellen MacArthur: because it was my dream, I wanted to really bring back what it was like, you know to be out there 24/7, to push a boat and yourself so hard. And to keep the show on the road, it's absolutely brutal at its worst.

Ilham Kadri: Yeah, it's fascinating because I keep saying to my people, because my grandmother used to tell me that: focus on your journey, right? And if you make it survive, if you survive and thrive, the destination is going to be bright. So you know, and that's what we're saying. I'm not there as a leader, whatever. I'm just in the journey, and your journey is survival. It's even, you know, more important and precious.

Ellen MacArthur: It is. And it's very interesting, you say that Ilham, because I've always felt personally that life is about the journey, not the destination, you know? The destination helps to give you a track or a route, but actually it's not about just getting there. Because when you're there, there's nothing left. It's about the journey. You have to love that journey. The journey is what you're living every day. The destination is over in a second.

Inspiration to turn to the circular economy

Ilham Kadri: Yeah. So now Ellen, the question which comes always, how come an adventurer, a sailor comes to building a foundation around circular economy. And obviously when people, they listen to you, they're inspired, but I am curious and intrigued about the moment in your life. What made that bridge between the stories you are telling us about your past sailing experience and adventure, and that dream, which came through to starting the Ellen MacArthur foundation.

Ellen MacArthur: Well, first of all, I never, ever thought I would stop sailing because it was the thing I wanted to do from the age of four. I was living the

dream, I had no wish to stop. I love it as much now as I ever did. You know, when you said in the intro, Ellen retired from sailing. For me, it never felt like that. You know, I still sail whenever I can, but I stepped back from professional sailing. And the reason I did that was because I became overwhelmingly aware of the nature of finite resources through taking that boat around the world. Now, when you set off, as I said, early, you take with you everything you need for your survival and you manage it down to the last drop of diesel for the generator, the last packet of food, and you see it go down. And if you need more, there is no more. You know, the nearest shop is two and a half thousand miles away, the closest people are manning the international space station above. You're in the middle of an ocean and you really understand the nature of finite resources and at sea it didn't hit me, it was after. I wrote something on the boat, which was highly relevant. It hadn't sunk in and I set foot off the boat having broken the record. And I suddenly realized it hit me that the world is no different. You know, we have finite resources available to us once in the history of humanity, yet our economic model, the very way we live and breathe and work uses them up. And that really hit me that if we have finite resources and we're using them up, then what on earth is the future going to look like? And to begin with, I thought someone will have all the answers, you know, I'm just a sailor, am I even thinking about this? And I started learning. And it was like seeing something under a stone. It was like a sparkle under a stone. And I had two choices. I either put that stone firmly back down and carried on with my dream job of sailing around the world but I learned about it and I couldn't do it. I couldn't put it back down. I didn't want to lift it up and find out, but I had to, my curiosity made me do it. And the more I learned, the more I realized I'd come across. As you said, the greatest challenge that I've ever thought of in my life. And I was living a very focused life with sailing. Everything was about the record and the race. And suddenly I saw the world as an entirely different place, and I couldn't turn back from that. And the more I learned, the more I realized I had to learn, and I feel exactly like that now, you know, I'm learning, I'm always learning. As a foundation, we're always learning. We're trying to learn what the future can look like. And that journey led me to create the foundation because I realized through that learning that there was a different way that our economy can run. That wasn't linear in the way it is today, where we take those precious finite resources, make things out of them, and throw them away. But we use those resources in an entirely different way that enables us to use them in a circular fashion whereby they flow through the economy whereby we can regenerate natural systems and suddenly there's this straight line, which is a conveyor belt switches to this incredible circle, which is regenerative and restorative and can go on forever. And that to me was like the penny dropping. And I suddenly thought that's it. I know nothing about this, but

that to me makes sense. It's common sense, it's circular. You know, life itself for billions of years has been circular. There's no waste in a forest, everything regenerates, and it's beautiful and it's diverse, and it's exciting. And our economy can be absolutely the same. And that's the energy that we created the Ellen MacArthur foundation with back in 2010. It was that: let's build a system that really can run in the long run.

What is the circular economy?

Ilham Kadri: Yeah. And I met you in 2019. So wow, what a journey, right? Let's imagine my son is 16, so he's a bit old, but a six year old kid in front of you, how would you explain in simple words, the circular economy?

Ellen MacArthur: I think the easiest way is to say it goes from a straight line where you drop off the end to a circle. It's about eliminating what we don't need, and there's an awful lot of that that feeds into the economy that we don't need. It's about circulating what we do, and it's about regenerating natural resources. And suddenly you go from this, let's slow down our demise, because it is, if it's that linear production line, let's just use a bit less and slow things down because we know we've got finite resources to one whereby you're making the world a better place. If you build a regenerative agriculture system, the soil is better at the end of every decade than it was when you started, your rebuilding that.

Ilham Kadri: The way they were doing it in the old days, right, Ellen?

Ellen MacArthur: It's so exciting. And suddenly your conversation goes from being, you know, the six year old told, you can't do this and you can't do this, and you mustn't do this. And there's only so much of this to one where, the more of you, the more of this, you do the better, the faster we do this, the better. The faster we grow this the better, the more innovative, the more creative you are, the better. You know, we have to design this. This is all about design. It's about right from the outset when we design a product or a piece of infrastructure, or I mean, you wouldn't use those words to a six-year-old, but you make anything when you make it, make it so you can get the stuff out and feed it back in again and make things better. I think that's such a positive story.

Ilham Kadri: So, and it resonates with me a lot because when I was six years old, you know, I grew up with my grandma and we came from humble roots, and she used to tell me we don't have the luxury to waste because we didn't have running water. And you know, even the veggies, you know, waste was actually a source for doing something else. So we were recycling everything because we didn't have that luxury to waste. And you realize that you can build that virtuous circle, including with water, which was the scarcest resource and most precious

resource in our home. So you are actually going back to the basics, right? And you are asking humanity to get back to the basics, right?

Ellen MacArthur: And your grandmother understood that that vegetable waste had value. It does have value. It has nutritional value for the soil, it has nutritional value for the animals. If you feed it to the animals, it's not waste. It's not something you can't do anything with, you can do many things with it. And it's about valorizing that within our current economy and the economy recognizing the value of that. And the economy, recognizing the things that have no value. Why in today's world when we can be so innovative, so creative, you know, we seem to be able to do anything we set our minds to, why would we make a piece of packaging that is going to become waste, that you can do nothing with it. To me, it seems absurd because we can do better than that. The first line on every design brief should be, you know, we need this material to feed back into the economy. If it doesn't, what's the point? Because we can do so much better.

Ilham Kadri: I'm so happy to say this, and I know that the Solvay scientists will listen to you, and I'm a chemist by background, like many of our audiences. But you know, we were not groomed or educated to build the products or craft or products, or imagine it for having a new life, you know, at the end of its current life. And that's what you are telling us. You say, no guys go back and ensure that your innovations are there to ensure a new life at the end of life.

Ellen MacArthur: It's a bit like your comment about the journey and the destination. The molecules in that product are on a journey. It's not about the destination becoming the dump. They're on a journey. What is that journey? And we don't know every stage of the journey, but if you turn it into waste, you do, because you know, that journey will come to an absolute end and that's the end. So those molecules are on a journey, and it's also interesting that it takes you way outside your normal field of vision. This is not about a siloed innovation, it's about a systemic change. The whole system has to change. It's about seeing how everything interacts, how not only you design that product so the molecules are on a journey, but also how does that journey play out? Who needs to be part of that journey to make sure those molecules are on a journey? Because there's no point in designing the perfect circular, I don't know, television where everything can be recovered and fed back into the system. And then that television ending up in landfill. You've failed because all the innovations there, but the system around it isn't there to enable the recovery of the materials and maybe it was sold. So as the user of the television, we throw it away. But you have to make sure that the whole system, the journey, the design, the everything is thought

about. So that molecule can continue its journey forever. And to me, that's really exciting.

Changing mindsets

Ilham Kadri: Absolutely. I mean we talked about mindsets, right? But what's our, in your mind, the biggest hurdle we must overcome to make the circular economy a reality.

Ellen MacArthur: I think there are many things that spring to mind, you know, policy changes and business model changes, design changes, different chemistry, of course. But actually the biggest hurdle I think is a mindset shift. And the fact that people see the opportunity of shifting to a circular economy. It's a very different conversation from the traditional sustainability, let's slow down how we use things, let's just switch to renewables. If you just look at the climate challenge that we have, switching to renewable energy, doesn't solve it. It's about 55%. There's still 45% of the climate crisis that isn't solved by that. It's the way we make and use things, including food. That is our economy. That is the economy we need to switch from linear to circular. And if you look at just five elements of that economy and you switch to circularity, you know, you can tackle about half of that remaining 45%. So it's a mindset shift. And I think, you know, one of the biggest hurdles is people getting their heads around the fact that we need to switch from linear to circular and that it is systemic change. It comes back to that point. This isn't about change within a silo. This is about much broader change where, you know, the biggest competitors in the world have to work together. This is where we have to decide on what success looks like for the IT industry or the automotive industry, or the plastic packaging industry, what is success? How does it look? What's the goal? Where are we trying to get to? Then let's all collaborate and work together to make that happen. And that's exactly what you've been doing with Renault and Veolia with the batteries. It's about coming together with organizations that can help to change the whole system, not just the design of a battery or the ability to recycle a battery, but the custody of the battery and the system the battery flows to. And that touches everyone from the finance industry to the marketing industry, to the managers within organizations. How are we incentivizing the middle managers within organizations to make things circular. If they're just incentivized on selling things or sales, it's never going to happen. This is about changing the system. So I'd say that's the biggest hurdle is everybody getting their heads around, what does the circular economy look like? Where are we trying to get to? And then make it happen? And that's lots of different levers, right? Right across organizations,

countries, and ecosystems to make that happen. And that could be industrial policy or it could be the incentivization structure for middle manager.

Ilham Kadri: you're right. The pockets impact the behavior and make it, you know, show it's matters. It's not just, you know, 31st of December type of activity. Are you seeing that big shift in mindset across industries you work with, Ellen?

Ellen MacArthur: Definitely. I think there's a real thirst for understanding what success looks like. You know, we've been in an incredibly unstable situation for several years, for many reasons, and COVID being one of them. One of the great reasons, it almost feels like our worlds have been thrown up and spun around in the air and they're landing back down again. And I think there's never before have I felt there's been a thirst for knowledge as to what, where are we trying to get to, you know, what is actually really going to work? We've had to think quickly, we've had to change quickly. We've done things that we never thought were possible really. And in many industries to keep the show on the road. And I think that puts us in a different place. So yes, absolutely, we're seeing big change.

Newfound agility in building the circular economy

Ilham Kadri: Coming back, you talk about COVID, right? And it was a stress test. I'm not sure how you felt, it was for me personally, a stress test as human being, but also as leader of a company. And I joke about March 2020, I was not anymore CEO, Chief Executive officer, I was Chief Mask Officer, just trying to find masks to protect our manufacturing people while others were teleworking. And it pushed us to be agile. We would have never bet that we can, we could do it as a company and it forced us to become more agile. Do you think that kind of agility can help and support in accelerating the circular economy, and building a better future?

Ellen MacArthur: I absolutely think it can. And I think to your point Ilham, you said that, you know, personally it was a real stress test. And I think it's when you go through those stress tests and maybe, you know, my sailing was part of that for me, you kind of put yourself under pressure and you see what you're capable of. And you know, you hope you can make it. Certainly for me, can I get through this? Well, I think I can. And you really realize what you're capable of. And from a business perspective, I think people have really begun to understand what businesses are capable of and how quickly businesses can shift and change and re-invent themselves. And also how quickly businesses can come from nowhere and become huge. And that is a motivator for a small to medium enterprise that wants to be huge and has a good idea, but it's also a motivator for those big

incumbent companies that have been doing the same thing for a long time. So we've seen agility. It may be your own agility or the agility of someone else, but you've seen how quickly things happen, and I think that's a great enabler of a circular economy. And that it gives you that can-do attitude of right: we've done this. How hard can this be? You know, we've actually just done this, you know, look at the supermarkets and distribution and home delivery. Overnight, there were plus minuses. Not everything went smoothly, but actually the system was pretty much reinvented overnight and it had to be, and people just got on and made it happen. So for me, that's a real plus. There are obviously many, many negatives of COVID and the first is, you know, so many people have died globally. It's been the most unbelievable human tragedy. But there are some positives to come out of it. And you know, we have seen how brittle our supply chains are and how suddenly you know, some things just fell out of the system. You know, the system couldn't cope, the system couldn't provide, and that's taught us how to build more resilient supply chains. And that's absolutely part of a circular economy. You know, where can you get your feed stock from? Well, actually, maybe it doesn't have to be more extraction from the other side of the earth, but there is this system whereby Veolia, Renault, and Solvay come together and you can build a system whereby you know, the feedstock of the batteries is you in your own network. That's much less brittle, much, much more resilient. And I think that thinking is really vital for that, for enabling a circular economy.

Chemistry the key to circular economy

Ilham Kadri: Yeah. Solvay is obviously in the chemical industry. I call it the mother of all industries. And indeed the chemical industry is part of the problem, the greenhouse gas emissions, right? But it's also part of the solution. What do you think is the role of chemistry in the circular economy, Ellen?

Ellen MacArthur: As you say, I think it's absolutely key and it's very easy to say that you're part of the problem, but the only way we're going to get to the solution is if the problem turns into the solution. That's vital. This isn't about, you know, stopping the world and restarting it. It's about saying this is linear, this is circular. We're going to move in this direction. Every step that we take, we're going to become one step more circular. You have clients, your clients ask for what they want. That's why this collaboration is so important. Now, what are they asking for? And we've seen massive shifts in the plastic packaging industry saying, actually, we don't want this anymore. We want something over here. We want something different. And you are a player in that system. You're at the beginning of the system, but soon when that system's circular, it's not the beginning any longer. You're part of that system that goes round and round, and that's an evolution. And I think it's absolutely right to say that the chemical

industry is the mother of all industries. Chemistry is behind everything. When you think of the world and their economy, be it, the natural world, and the hard economic world. It's part of all of that. But it's about making that world work. Chemistry will always be part of the economy. But what role are you playing? Are you playing now the production line conveyor belt we'll do chemistry and it'll fall off the end, or are you enabling a whole different way for the economy to function? And that's firmly where Solvay sits in your mindset, with your goals. We are moving over here, guys, and in our conversations, this is where we're headed. And I think that's incredibly powerful.

Power of partnerships

Ilham Kadri: Absolutely. And we only realize what took us here will not bring us there. And you are talking about a lot about collaboration, the partnerships, the creation of ecosystem, right at the service of the circular economy, because we cannot do it alone. And that's what I found really brilliant in the Ellen MacArthur foundation is, you know the ability to find the Veolia, but also to talk about Black Rock. Because without investors, and without investors helping us to grow, to have different business model is not going to work. You know, they only punish us because you know, our top line, you know, is not growing in a linear way, right?

Ellen MacArthur: I think it's interesting actually when you talk about collaboration and the investment being vital, it's also collaboration in an even broader sense. Over the years since we launched the foundation, we've worked with many organizations, NGOs, government, cities, regions, small to medium enterprises, all sorts. And it's been absolutely fascinating, but quite early on, one thing that really struck me was when you look at circular economy, it really is a win-win situation. If you are a business that wants to become circular, your conversations are incredibly well aligned with a government that wants to become circular because you're building that resilient economy that benefits people and employment and the natural world and biodiversity, and the very nature of business that can run in the long term. You're building something which is resilient. And it's a very, very different conversation between let's say the European commission and a business from the traditional conversation around policy where you're saying, no, well, this is bad, this is polluting. So therefore we are going to bring policy and to stop this and this business very often in the past as lobbied against that. So yeah, but what about the employment and what about this? And this is going to have a massive impact on our business, which of course it will. But once you start to see the circular journey, you start to see what actually there's a benefit for that business in being circular. Let's create a level playing field of benefit for everybody. And that's a very, very different

conversation and it's a very different form of collaboration to those that we've been used to, perhaps since, you know, the onset of the industrial revolution.

Tackling fast fashion

Ilham Kadri: Absolutely. And it talks about level playing field, but you're right, that is something as well. I found with the Ellen MacArthur foundation is this inspiration from other industries. And I got to meet the fashion industry, right? What are some of the most exciting circular innovations out there to combat fast fashion, for example, Ellen.

Ellen MacArthur: Well, I think just looking at fashion generally, the statistics are quite shocking. You know, we think of many industries of being quite polluting. I think one of the things that's really made the fast fashion industry sit up and be concerned, you know, all the statistics, which really are quite horrendous with regards to you know, how much of the apparel that's produced today actually gets recycled, how much ends up being landfilled. Those statistics are shocking. 87% of all materials used to make clothes are either landfilled or burned. 87%. You know, more greenhouse gases than all transport and shipping combined globally from the fashion industry. So it's not working. It comes back to that same point: business as usual is not okay. So what can we do? And actually it's that collaboration part again, you know, there are some big rethinks needed in the industry. There's one element around working together to make something happen. And we've created something called the Jeans Redesign through the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Network. And there are over a hundred participants globally, including Chloe, Gap, H&M, Tommy Hilfiger, all designing circular jeans and making them and selling circular jeans. So jeans designed to sit within a system, a circular system. And that's a collaboration. And these are competitors, absolute head to head competitors, working together to do something different. And that's really motivating when you see that level, that scale of change from that number of organizations. For us, that's been really, really interesting. But there's also a change of foot I think in the mindset within the fashion industry. It's been about fashion, fashion, and flowing through. And if products flow through into a circle, then actually you're building that cyclical system. But there's also an element of durability of goods and speed of flowing of the linear goods. And we're seeing some big changes, you know, the scale of opportunity. And this comes back to you know, the investors of the world and that the change in the mindset of the investors, and the speed at which some companies as we've mentioned, who come from nowhere and they become billion dollar companies in you know just a handful of years. Look at TheRealReal that resells luxury garments. They're over a billion dollars. And that happens seemingly overnight. And the investors are very interested in these kinds of organizations because

they, to our point of earlier, are seeing the value in the system. There is value in those products and people realize there's value in those products they have, and they can be fed back into the system, not thrown away. And so that's existing all over the world in lots of different pockets, some enormous pockets, and some newbie startups just kicking off, but there's a huge economic potential in that space around fashion, not just how you design it and make it that's a really big deal and an ever growing field, but also the system that the products sit within, how do they sit? How do they flow? How do they, you know, have use after use? And there's some very, very innovative thinking in that space, which is really motivating.

Inspiring the younger generation

Ilham Kadri: Yeah. I know one of your passions Ellen is reaching and inspiring the younger generation. I mean, I said it at the beginning of our podcast, you are a role model. You are inspiring many of us younger or less younger by the way. But can you tell us about some of your collaborations with young people through the foundation?

Ellen MacArthur: It's interesting, Ilham, when we started the foundation, it was back in 2010, we ran a series of workshops and it was actually these workshops that influenced my thinking quite heavily. And the first set were with many young people. I was there, you know, I was running the workshops.

Ilham Kadri: You were reverse mentored, right?

Ellen MacArthur: Very much so

Ilham Kadri: I practice that as well.

Ellen MacArthur: Some fascinating insights came out of those early conversations. And it was very interesting. I remember one of the things I did in these very early workshops was I had a bag, just a small plastic bag designed for holding components, but it was bio-based. It was non-toxic and I'd stand in front of the groups of young people and I'd have this glass and this bag and I'd go, now you've got one of these on your table, you know? Put it in the water, and they'd put it in the water and stir it round, and that it would go all kind of yucky and slimy and they'd be fascinated. And then I just stand at the front and drink one. Then they would just think that was the most unbelievable thing they'd ever seen because that's not what they expected. They thought it was a plastic bag, but it wasn't because it was designed in a different way, and it was fitting within another system. And that kicks this all off, this different way of thinking. And then we ended up with comments from young people about, but actually the world's

just a bit like Lego, isn't it. In fact, it's all about the periodic table of the elements is they are the Lego building blocks and that's everything, isn't it? That's how everything fits together, and we can go down to them and back from them. And it just really opened up their thinking. And then later we were working with a school and I remember a comment from one of the teachers. There was a school in the UK and the teacher was working with his design and technology students, and he had a student come up to them and had done these exams, age 16. He loved the subject DMT. He said, Sir, you know, I love DMT, you know, I've done my exams at 16, but I always felt, he said, I always felt that everything was already designed. You know, there was nothing for me to do. He said, but now, and he was doing his A levels. Now his exams at 18, he said, now, I've learned about the circular economy, everything I see I want to redesign.

Ilham Kadri: Wow, that's great.

Ellen MacArthur: And for him, everything needed to be done. Everything was an opportunity. And that's it. That comment for me, absolutely sums up the circular economy. It's an opportunity to do better. It's an opportunity to build a system that works, that benefits biodiversity and the economy, and employment. And it's just a massive opportunity. And so for me, working with young people, they haven't been through our, and when I say our, I talk about, you know, the older generations, which sadly, I probably now sit within. We were the result of a linear education system, where we learned through revolution and a production line. This next generation, they're not. They think differently. By definition, they think differently. And as time goes on, they'll think more and more differently and see what's possible almost more spontaneously than we do. We take longer, they don't. And I think that's very, very exciting.

Ilham Kadri: It's very exciting. you're right. We need to see the world through their lenses, not our lenses where we have been formatted and grown up with this linear system.

Ilham Kadri: So when we get to the last part of the end, Ellen, let me go back to maybe the human being, the Ellen. I read somewhere that your great, great grandfather was a coal miner talking about energy transition. And I read that you remembered sitting on his knee, listening to his miner stories. And you did your maths on the years of coal and energy transition, what would you tell today to that little girl? That six year old girl sitting on the knees of her great grandfather? What would you tell her?

Ellen MacArthur: What I'd say to that six year old kid is follow your heart because that's what I have always done in my life. I followed my heart and that took me to

the most far away oceans to the middle of nowhere and led me perhaps to the most important place I've ever been, which is now with the foundation. I followed my heart because it was the right thing to do. And I'm so glad that I did.

Ilham Kadri: And what would you tell women CEOs or men CEOs, or business leaders, what they can learn from this journey?

Ellen MacArthur: I just say, be part of the future. Don't be part of the past. And that's a pretty simple switch to flick. There's a lot to understand to make it happen, but there's an opportunity here to be seized, so let's make that future happen together. And it can only happen through collaboration.

Ilham Kadri: That's the best conclusion I could dream about. Thank you Dame Ellen. Thank you, Ellen. Thank you so much for joining me today. Your story is such an inspiration for me as a business leader, for me as a human being, for young people, for everyone. You are truly leading the charge to enable the circular economy. And we're right there with you and with this future generation, our kids. So thank you for this fascinating discussion, Ellen. Thank you very much.

Ellen MacArthur: Thank you Ilham and thank you for your kind words, so much appreciated. Thanks.



ABOUT THE GUEST

At the age of 24, Ellen MacArthur became the youngest person to sail around the world solo, coming in second in the Vendée Globe race. And in 2005, she broke the world record for the fastest solo sail around the world. For her incredible achievement, she was named a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. After breaking the world record, she retired from professional sailing to begin an even bigger race: she is now leading the charge to accelerate the transition to a circular economy through the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#).



ABOUT THE HOST

Ilham Kadri is a purpose-driven business leader, scientist, optimist and world citizen who is passionate about making businesses sustainable AND profitable, science-based AND human, daring AND caring. [Full bio](#)

ABOUT THE PODCAST

AND is the future is a podcast hosted by Solvay CEO Ilham Kadri that brings together great minds to address the opportunities and challenges of making businesses both sustainable AND profitable. The podcast will gather thought leaders across the globe to discuss how businesses can profitably reach carbon neutrality and sustainability goals, ensure that innovation is at the service of humanity and its progress, protect biodiversity, transform the value chain, unleash peoples' full potential through diversity, equity and inclusion, and much more! Find more on [solvay.com](#).