

The Institute of Export & International Trade's (IOE&IT) session at the WTO Public Forum, on Thursday 4th October 2018, featured the showcase final of the inaugural 'Open to Export International Business Awards'. This competition – backed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) – encouraged MSMEs from anywhere in the world to take ownership of their international strategies by completing an 'Export Action Plan', using [Open to Export's](#) (OTE) online planning tool. At the session, the 12 best export planners pitched to a panel of expert judges for the chance to win \$5000 cash towards the implementation of their plans.

The finalists travelled from far and wide to join us for the session, hailing from Peru, Vietnam, Algeria, Scotland, Zambia, Belize, Mongolia, Macedonia, Trinidad & Tobago, Armenia, St Kitts, and Jordan. Many of the finalists also joined us on our exhibition stand throughout the Public Forum, promoting their products and businesses to the international media, business officials, and governmental figures attending in Geneva. During the session, each finalist spent 10 minutes presenting on why they would most benefit from the cash prize, followed by 5 minutes of questions from the judges.

On the judging panel were Yi Xiaozhun (Deputy Director General of the WTO), Chris Southworth (Secretary General of ICC UK), Arne Mielken (Young President of the IOE&IT), Nicholas Niggli (Director General for Economic Development, Research and Innovation, Republic and State of Geneva), and Shaun Lake (Senior Adviser: E-Learning at the International Trade Centre). The session was compered by Director General of the IOE&IT, Lesley Batchelor OBE, and moderated by William Barns-Graham, the Senior Content Editor for the IOE&IT.

Though any of these inspiring companies would have been worthy winners, the one company chosen to take home the cash prize was Dytech Limited - a Zambian honey exporter run by entrepreneur Alan Chanda. His delectable product range impressed the judges, while his company's scope for employing and training staff (40% of whom are women) to fund them to have better living situations and opportunities was truly inspiring. Hot Mama's Belize (pepper sauce producers) and Lhamour (skincare products from Mongolia) also won free membership with the International Chamber of Commerce as runners up.

After the session, at an awards ceremony in the WTO building atrium at which the winner announcement took place, the IOE&IT were awarded with a trophy and officially recognised as a 'WTO-ICC Small Business Champion'.

WTO Deputy Director-General Yi said:

"I would like to congratulate the Institute of Export and International Trade on the completion of their project. Developing the skills of SMEs and giving them the necessary guidance is essential if we want them to increase their participation in international trade. I would also wish to congratulate all the finalists for the great ideas they have presented today."

The Finalists

- Andean Beauty
- Be Bio
- Bit Bait Infinity
- Crùbag
- Dytech Limited
- Hot Mama's Belize Ltd
- For the Record
- Lhamour (Natural Essentials LLC)
- Macedonia-Export



- Old Bridge Winery
- Sugar Town Organics
- Teenah.org