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## **THE ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE APPLAUDS RECIPIENTS OF ITS ANNUAL AWARDS FOR 2014**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 30, 2015) – The Organization of Women in International Trade (“OWIT”) is pleased to announce selection of Ms. Alma Farias as the 2014 Woman of the Year, Ms. Beatrice Kagondu as the 2014 Chapter Member of the Year, and OWIT-Ottawa as the 2014 Chapter of the Year.

### **2014 Woman of the Year – Ms. Alma Farias, Ontario Representative for TFO Canada**

Alma is a senior international business consultant that assists companies and organizations develop business by identifying key business partners and projects in Canada and Emerging Economy Countries. She provides customized assistance across a wide range of industries that includes auto parts, aerospace, manufacturing industry, telecommunications, agrifood, textile and consumer products among others. Alma has developed key government, association, and investor relations, as well as international sales and supply networks around the world. She has organized international delegations, conferences, and trade missions in Canada and Latin America. Alma is the Ontario Representative for Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) Canada, an organization that promotes trade between Canada and emerging economy countries. Alma is also part of the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) Consulting Network. An active volunteer in numerous business associations, Alma has been a longstanding active OWIT member, serving on both local chapter and the international boards. She currently serves as the Co-President of OWIT Toronto. She is a co-founder and former Vice President of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Monterrey Mexico, and has also served as Vice President of the Canadian Council for the Americas and the Brazil Canada Chamber of Commerce in Toronto. In recognition of her longstanding contributions to the field of international trade and business, in February 2014, Alma received OWIT Toronto’s Joanna Townsend Excellence Award for Leadership in International Trade.

### **2014 OWIT Chapter Member of the Year – Beatrice Kagondu, Vice Chairperson of Membership – OWIT Nairobi; Owner and Manager, Sweet Inspirations**

In addition to owning and operating her bakery, Sweet Inspirations, Beatrice Kagondu has tirelessly served OWIT Nairobi as its Vice Chairperson of Membership. Through her dedication, she has spearheaded a variety of successful membership campaigns which have strengthened the prominence of OWIT in the Nairobi business community and significantly increased the chapter’s membership. Not limiting her contributions to just membership, Beatrice actively engaged in the chapter’s corporate sponsorship campaign, helping to raise an unprecedented amount sponsorship dollars for the chapter’s activities. She also leveraged her business contacts to benefit other Chapter members by connecting OWIT Nairobi members to the International Labor Organization’s Growth of Women Enterprise program,

which helped these fellow entrepreneurs grow their own businesses. Passionate about being a part of the OWIT global network, Beatrice used her own funds to attend the OWIT International Board meeting in Ottawa, Canada to network with other OWIT chapter leaders and to gain valuable knowledge to continue to help OWIT Nairobi remain a vital organization in the Nairobi business community.

**2014 OWIT Chapter of the Year – OWIT-Ottawa, Vice President of Outreach – Ms. Monica Podgorny**

Founded in 2010, OWIT-Ottawa has established itself as a recognized leader in international trade in Canada's national capital region. OWIT-Ottawa has leveraged its location at the centre of Canadian international trade initiatives and policies to become known as the quality "one-stop-shop" for networking, education, mentoring and resource-sharing with a loyal and growing following of international trade corporate professionals and entrepreneurs, government officials, foreign ambassadors and diplomats, non-governmental leaders and academia. OWIT-Ottawa's events have also become a forum for government and business announcements to the trade community, with frequent media mentions in government and non-government publications acclaiming its work in fostering international trade and creating opportunities for women to succeed in global markets. It annually participates in the Canadian Annual Conference on International Law and supports the Global Women's Network Annual International Trade Forum & Conference. In 2014, under the leadership of its Vice President of Events, Ms. Monica Podgorny (an international trade and competition attorney with McMillan LLP), OWIT-Ottawa hosted the OWIT International business meeting, during which the Parliamentary Speaker to the Minister of Trade and Development announced a robust program to expand trade opportunities for Canadian small businesses. OWIT-Ottawa also spear-headed a sponsorship from TFO Canada to subsidize the cost of attending the meeting by several OWIT members from Nairobi and Peru.

"The 2014 award recipients are all outstanding contributors to OWIT and the broader global trade and business community," stated OWIT International President Karen Bland. "Each recipient has leveraged their passion and dedication to advance women in international trade and business. Alma has successfully opened doors for entrepreneurial women to capture economic benefits of global trade for their businesses. Beatrice has championed international growth and opportunity for her fellow entrepreneurs in Nairobi through OWIT membership. OWIT-Ottawa has become the premier trade organization in Canada's national capital, while supporting the OWIT global network in concrete and meaningful ways."

"We celebrate the accomplishments of our annual award winners. They are stellar examples of what makes OWIT such an extraordinary global organization." Karen added.

**On Wednesday, February 25, 2015 at 10:00 am EST**, OWIT will formally honor the 2014 award recipients during its annual awards webinar. Open to the public and free of charge, the webinar offers an opportunity to hear from the recipients directly about their accomplishments. Details and registration for the awards webinar are forthcoming and will be posted at [www.owit.org](http://www.owit.org).

***About OWIT***

Founded in 1989, The Organization of Women in International Trade International ([www.owit.org](http://www.owit.org)) is a voluntary, non-profit professional organization dedicated to advancing global trade opportunities for women through networking and educational programs. It is comprised of more than 2,000 members in local chapters operating in the Americas, Europe, and Africa as well as "virtual" chapter comprised of individuals who do not reside or work in localities with a local OWIT Chapter.