

Bold ideas ahead of Africa Entrepreneurship Congress

BY TITUS KAKEMBO

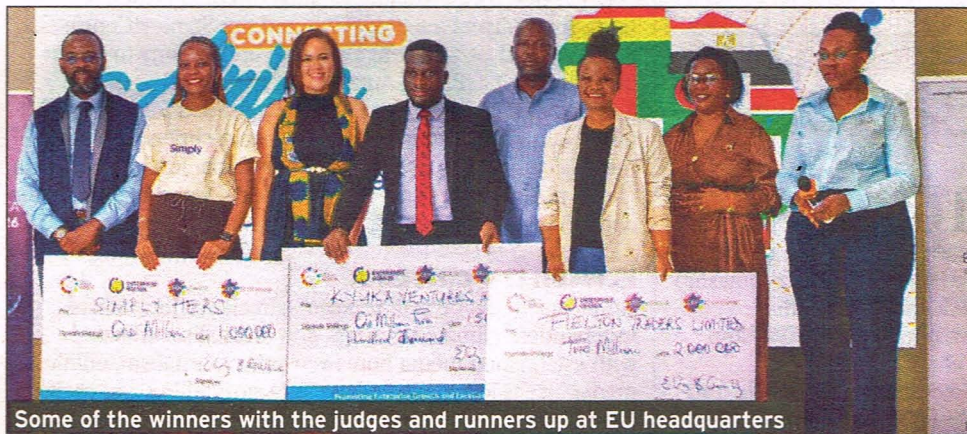
For a few emotional moments, the conference hall fell silent. Then came applause, cheers and tears.

Munyase Hellen could hardly contain her excitement after being announced winner of a start-up pitch competition organised by Enterprise Uganda ahead of the forthcoming Global Entrepreneurship Congress Africa (GEC+Africa) 2026. Overwhelmed with emotion, she gasped for breath, wiped away tears and paced across the stage in disbelief after receiving a sh2m cash prize to boost her recycling business venture.

Her victory came after a highly competitive pitching session that attracted ten entrepreneurs, each presenting innovative business ideas before a panel of judges that included entrepreneurship experts from South Africa and officials from Enterprise Uganda.

The competition is part of preparations for GEC+Africa 2026, which will take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre in South Africa from September 16-17.

The continental entrepreneurship gathering is expected to attract representatives from 38 countries and provide one of Africa's largest platforms



Some of the winners with the judges and runners up at EU headquarters

for startups, investors, policymakers and business support organisations.

Speaking at the event, Carmen Rudd, one of the organisers of GEC+Africa, described the congress as a catalyst for enterprise growth

and cross-border business opportunities. "More than 2,000 delegates are expected to attend the congress. There will be over 1,500 start-up exhibitions and about 150 policymakers from different parts of the world," Rudd

said.

For Munyase, the victory represented more than prize money. Her recycling venture seeks to transform waste into valuable products while addressing environmental challenges

facing communities.

The first runner-up was Sonko Jamal, founder and chief executive officer of Kyuka Ventures Innovation Hub, who received sh1.5m to advance his clean energy initiative. His enterprise focuses on producing affordable cooking gas from waste materials.

Another standout participant was Joan Atuhairwe, founder of Simply Her, a venture dedicated to improving sexual and reproductive health awareness among young people.

Her presentation challenged long-held social taboos that often prevent open discussions about sexual health.