



PRESS RELEASE

13 November 2025

TIA STATEMENT ON PASSING OF PROFESSOR KEOLEBOGILE SHIRLEY MOTAUNG

Issued by the Chairperson on behalf of the Board and Management of the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)

The Board and Management of the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) express their deepest sorrow at the passing of Professor Keolebogile Shirley “Keo” Motaung, a respected member of the TIA Board, an accomplished biomedical scientist, visionary entrepreneur and passionate advocate for inclusive innovation.

Prof. Keo, as she was affectionately known, has been a valued member of the TIA Board since June 2024 and played an integral role in shaping the organisation’s growth and strategic direction. Her insight, professionalism and unwavering commitment to her fiduciary duties had a profound impact on the Agency, particularly as TIA crafted the TIA 2.0 Strategy, which positions the Agency for the next decade of transformative impact.

Throughout her tenure, she embodied excellence in leadership and integrity, earning the admiration and respect of all who worked with her.

A distinguished biomedical scientist, entrepreneur and trailblazing innovator, Prof. Keo made remarkable contributions to the fields of stem cells, tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, and health innovation. Her pioneering development of La-Africa Soother, a plant-based anti-inflammatory ointment, remains a powerful example of how scientific discovery can be translated into real-world, socially responsive solutions.

With over 26 years of experience in higher education, she dedicated her life to bridging the gap between scientific discovery and socio-economic impact an ethos deeply aligned with TIA’s mandate. She was a tireless champion for women in STEAMI (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics, and Innovation), mentoring countless emerging researchers, scientists, and entrepreneurs.

“Prof. Keo brought with her a profound energy, sharp insight, and a direct, no-nonsense approach that consistently pushed both the Board and Management to higher levels of excellence. As Chairperson, I could always depend on her practical experience especially when evaluating proposals in the biotechnology space.

“She scrutinised every detail with the precision of a seasoned scientist and never hesitated to speak truthfully about what was right or wrong. Her honesty, courage and clarity of thought made her counsel invaluable, particularly in the face of complex decisions,” says Mr. Loyiso Tyira, Chairperson of the TIA Board.

“We are deeply saddened by Prof. Motaung’s passing. She was a trusted advisor and a passionate advocate for our work. Her wisdom, integrity, and vision helped guide TIA through

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important milestones. We are profoundly grateful for her service and lasting impact. Her recent reappointment to the TIA Board was a testament to the immense value she brought to the Agency,” he concludes.

TIA extends its heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, colleagues and the many individuals she inspired across the scientific and innovation landscapes. We remain profoundly grateful for her invaluable contribution and the enduring legacy she leaves behind.

Prof. Keo will be deeply missed by the Board, Management, Staff and the entire National System of Innovation.

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