

MEDIA STATEMENT

TIA signs four strategic partnerships and announces investment to accelerate innovation, industrialisation and economic growth

Gqeberha, 12 June 2026 – The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an entity of the Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI), signed four Partnership Agreements with Nelson Mandela University (NMU) and Fluorochemicals South Africa (FSA), Coega Development Corporation (CDC), and the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI), including a funding agreement with NMU and InnoVenton, a Technology Station based at Nelson Mandela University. The signing ceremony took place today at the Coega Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Gqeberha.

Signed under the theme “Innovation for Industrialisation,” these Agreements are part of TIA’s ongoing efforts, as an innovation catalyst, to strengthen partnerships in line with its 2.0 Strategy. The agreements mark the culmination of engagements with key partners and industry stakeholders in the Eastern Cape, to advance shared objectives, drive innovation commercialisation, and unlock opportunities for collaborative initiatives, including the establishment of innovation and technology infrastructure, skills development programmes, and sector-focused innovation hubs.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, TIA CEO Dr Titus Mathe said the partnership agreements reflect a shared commitment to building an innovation-led economy that drives sustainable industrial growth, creates jobs, and delivers long-term economic value to South Africa.

“As TIA advances its 2.0 Strategy, we are intentionally strengthening partnerships that combine expertise, resources, and investments across the public and private sectors. Our mandate extends beyond funding innovation; we also curate the National System of Innovation (NSI) that connects innovators with industry, investors, research institutions, and government entities,” Dr Mathe said.

Dr. Mathe added, “Collectively through these MoAs, we are establishing pathways that translate innovation into commercial opportunities, enhance industrial competitiveness, and promote inclusive economic growth for the benefit of all South Africans.”

Agreement with Nelson Mandela University (NMU) and Fluorochemicals South Africa (FSA)

The MoA with NMU and FSA establishes a partnership to boost research, innovation, and commercialisation in South Africa’s fluorochemicals sector. It aims to improve technical skills, promote fluorspar beneficiation, localise fluorochemicals technologies and IP, and build skills and innovation-driven value chains to foster industrial growth and economic development.

The TIA-NMU-Fluorochemicals SA, Fluorochemicals Strategic Innovation Programme is the repurposed Fluorochemicals Expansion Initiative (FEI) and is now being backed

up by TIA, as an initiative aimed at beneficiating South Africa's rich fluorspar (one of SA's critical minerals) reserves into high-value specialty chemicals and products rather than simply exporting raw minerals.

NMU Director of Research Support and Management, Dr Palesa Mothapo, said the partnership with TIA represents a step towards enhancing South Africa's innovation and industrial development.

"By combining expertise, resources, and networks, we aim to advance research, technology, commercialisation, and skills within the fluorochemicals industry. This partnership demonstrates academia, industry, and government working together to build competitive value chains, foster innovation, and generate socioeconomic benefits for the country," Dr Mothapo said.

Agreement with Coega Development Corporation (CDC)

The Agreement with CDC establishes a framework for collaboration across research, technology, development, innovation, and commercialisation. The partnership will pilot and test new technologies in the CDC Special Economic Zone (SEZ), advance commercialisation, promote knowledge sharing, and support skills development to boost innovation-led industrial growth and economic development.

CDC CEO Themba Koza said the partnership with TIA strengthens the shared commitment to positioning the CDC SEZ as a hub for innovation, technology development, and industrial growth.

"By establishing opportunities to test and pilot emerging technologies, support commercialisation efforts, and develop technical expertise, the partnership will facilitate the translation of research and innovation into practical solutions that can bolster innovation competitiveness, enhance its efficiency, and promote sustainable economic development," Koza said.

Agreement with the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI)

The agreement with SAIMI aims to strengthen South Africa's maritime knowledge and innovation ecosystem, as well as the commercialisation of technology and innovation, including marine robotics and advanced systems to grow the ocean economy.

SAIMI CEO Odwa Mtati said the partnership with TIA marks an important step toward strengthening South Africa's maritime innovation ecosystem and advancing the growth of the ocean economy.

"By leveraging SAIMI's extensive network, TIA will support the research, development, and commercialisation of innovative maritime technologies such as underwater research vessels, buoys, sensors and drones, to address challenges such as illegal fishing, fish stock identification and climate change resilience, as well as contribute to the marine manufacturing base and entrepreneurship through incubation. This partnership also aims to accelerate skills development both at higher education level

and industry level, and fosters innovation to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of South Africa's maritime industry," Mtati said.

Investment and Establishment of the Fluorochemicals Strategic Innovation Programme

TIA also entered into a funding agreement with NMU and InnoVenton, a Technology Station based at Nelson Mandela University to provide technical support to the programme.

The Fluorochemical Strategic Innovation Programme is anchored in Zone 7 of the Coega SEZ, and this will be the economic hub for fluorochemicals, to service both the domestic and global markets by benefiting Fluorspar.

The funding will support technology development and innovation, making it easier for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and industry partners to create commercially successful technologies and products.

TIA CEO, Dr Titus Mathe, said these partnerships and investments are to catalyse an enable innovation led industrialisation through sovereign technologies and products and thus ensuring localisation.

"These partnerships will unlock opportunities across critical sectors, increase exports, strengthen innovation capabilities, support entrepreneurship, and create sustainable jobs, thereby demonstrating innovation's vital role in building a competitive and inclusive economy," Mathe said.

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About the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)

The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) is a public entity in South Africa that serves as a key institutional intervention to bridge the gap between the innovation undertaken by higher education institutions, science councils, public entities, and the private sector and the commercialisation of these innovations.

Established in 2010, TIA has a national footprint with offices in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, and Gauteng. The core mandate of the Agency is to fund and support innovative technologies with strong commercial potential. In addition to financial support, TIA offers a range of programmes that provide non-financial assistance to innovators and small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs).

TIA also acts as a catalyst and enabler of innovation through strategic partnerships at local, continental, and global levels. Read more at <https://www.tia.org.za/who-we-are/>.