

Media Release

Prof Patience Mthunzi-Kufa (OMB) – South African physicist and the country’s first PhD graduate in Biophotonics

Approved for public release

Tuesday, 10 March 2026

The University of South Africa (Unisa) takes pride in introducing members of the media to one of its distinguished academics, Professor Patience Mthunzi-Kufa. She is a pioneering South African physicist and the country’s first PhD graduate in Biophotonics.

Professor Mthunzi-Kufa leads the Photonics Research Centre within the College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET) at the University of South Africa. Through this role, her research advances the strategic development of photonics across several thematic areas. Her work focuses not only on scientific discovery but also on developing practical innovations that improve health outcomes, strengthen food security, protect water resources, support sustainable energy solutions, and build photonics capacity across the African continent.

An internationally recognised and widely published scientist, Professor Mthunzi-Kufa has received numerous honours for her contributions to science and innovation. These include the Order of Mapungubwe in Bronze (OMB). She is a former member and leader of both the South African Young Academy of Science and the Global Young Academy, and she is also a TED Fellow.

During her tenure at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), she received several institutional awards as well as national recognition, including the TW Kambule–NSTF Researcher Award in 2024. She continues to contribute to the global scientific community through her service on several international scientific committees and was recently appointed Distinguished Professor at the University of South Africa.

Members of the media are encouraged to invite Professor Mthunzi-Kufa for profile interviews, expert commentary, and scientific analysis on topics related to photonics, science innovation, research development, and the role of science in addressing societal challenges. She is available on **079 939 4040**.

/Ends.

For RSVP’s and enquiries, please contact Senior Media Officers Tommy Huma on 072 218 6197 / 012 429 3981 / humatm@unisa.ac.za OR Edgar Rathelele on 063 731 5456 / 012 429 3981 / ratheme@unisa.ac.za .



ISSUED BY UNISA - MEDIA AFFAIRS

Department of Institutional Advancement (DIA)

