

## **Media Statement**

### **Unisa celebrates continental astronomy leadership as its Head of Astrophysics and Space Sciences, Professor James Chibueze shines on global stage**

**Approved for public release**  
**Wednesday, 04 March 2026**

The University of South Africa (Unisa) proudly marks a defining moment in African scientific excellence as Distinguished Professor James Chibueze takes centre stage in global astronomy. His prestigious Royal Society Rising Star Africa Prize Lecture in London, coupled with Unisa's leadership role in the Africa Millimetre Telescope (AMT) project, underscores the institution's growing influence in frontier science, international collaboration and continued research leadership.

#### **Professor James Chibueze delivers Royal Society Rising Star Africa Prize Lecture**

Professor James Chibueze, a Distinguished Professor of Astrophysics and Head of Unisa's Centre for Astrophysics and Space Sciences, is currently in London to deliver the prestigious Royal Society Rising Star Africa Prize Lecture. This lecture forms part of his acceptance of the Royal Society Rising Star Africa Prize, awarded in recognition of his groundbreaking work in advancing African astronomy through pioneering research, capacity building, and strengthening international scientific collaboration.

The Royal Society, the United Kingdom's national academy of sciences founded in 1660, is globally recognised for honouring excellence and innovation in scientific research. Awards conferred by the Royal Society are highly regarded and reflect the exceptional calibre of the recipients.

#### **Unisa strengthens African astronomy through strategic engagement in Namibia**

On Thursday, 26 February 2026, Unisa Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, led a delegation to the Gamsberg Mountain in Namibia to visit the site of the first Africa Millimetre Telescope (AMT). This milestone positions Africa at the forefront of global millimetre-wave astronomy. The AMT will operate as part of the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) network — the same network that captured the world's first image of a black hole in 2019.

As Africa's first millimetre-wave radio telescope, the AMT represents a transformative addition to the continent's research infrastructure. It will significantly enhance Africa's contribution to global black hole imaging, astrophysical research, and advanced training of the next generation of astronomers and space scientists. It also positions the University of South Africa (Unisa) and the University of Namibia (UNAM) at the forefront of global millimetre astronomy.

During the visit, Unisa and UNAM signed a strategic addendum to their Memorandum of Understanding, thus consolidating their partnership in scientific, technical, and outreach initiatives linked to the AMT project. Unisa has committed financial investment, technical expertise, and long-term research support towards the project's development and operation.

#### **Leadership driving scientific diplomacy and continental impact**

These milestones reflect Unisa's strategic commitment to strengthening Africa's scientific capabilities under the leadership of Professor Puleng LenkaBula. Her focus on science diplomacy, international



collaboration, and research excellence has positioned Unisa as a continental leader in frontier scientific research.

Unisa remains committed to expanding Africa's footprint in the global knowledge economy, supporting world-class research, empowering African scientists, and advancing discoveries that respond to humanity's greatest scientific questions.

**/Ends.**

**Spokesperson** : Professor Boitumelo Senokoane – 072 390 4724

For enquiries and interview requests, please contact: Mr Edgar Rathelele or Mr Tommy Huma (Unisa Senior Media Officers) on 0637315456 / [ratheme@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ratheme@unisa.ac.za) 072 218 6197 / [humatm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:humatm@unisa.ac.za)

**ISSUED BY UNISA MEDIA AFFAIRS**

