

Update on Intense Tropical Cyclone Batsirai

Intense tropical cyclone Batsirai has just passed to the north of both Reunion and Mauritius Islands and is currently positioned at 19°S 53°E as at 09h00 SAST (Fig. 1).

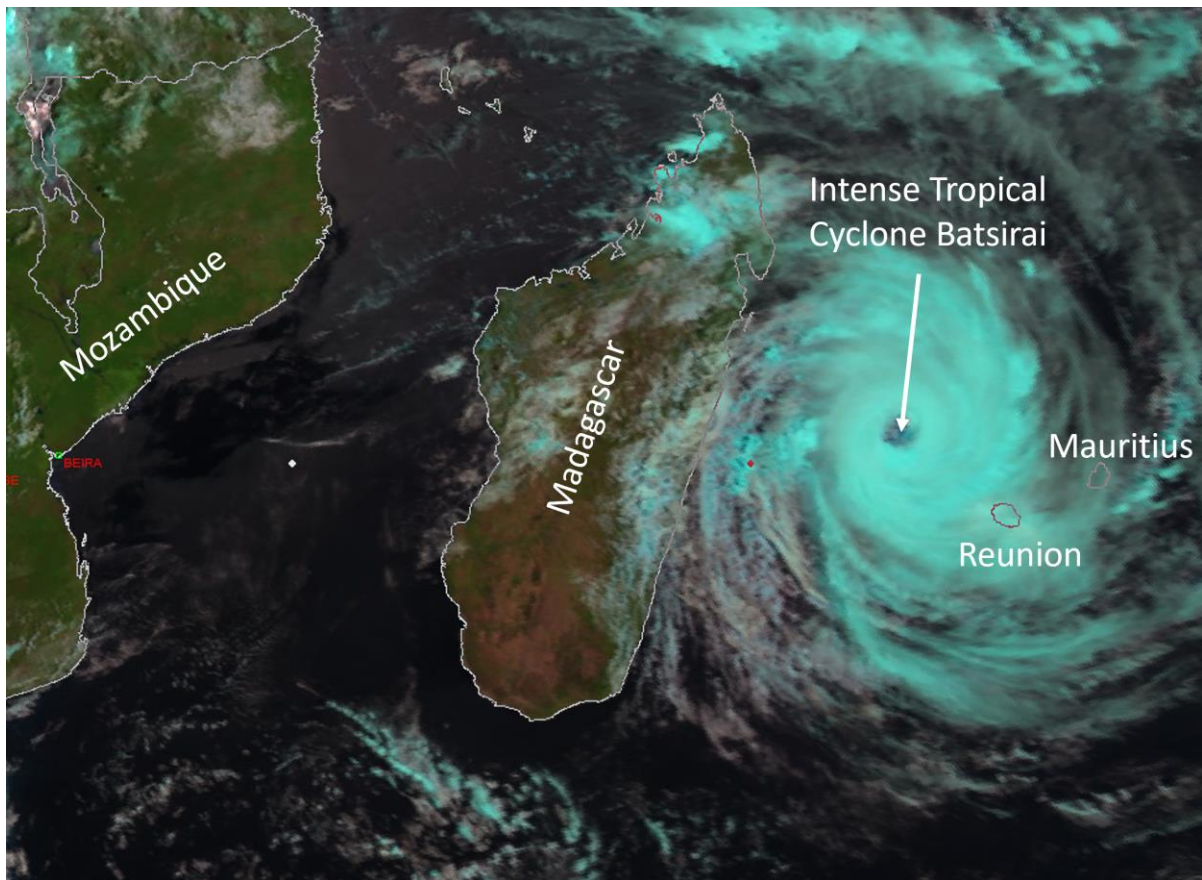


Figure 1: Day Natural Colour satellite image showing position of Batsirai at 09h00 SAST. Image courtesy EUMETSAT

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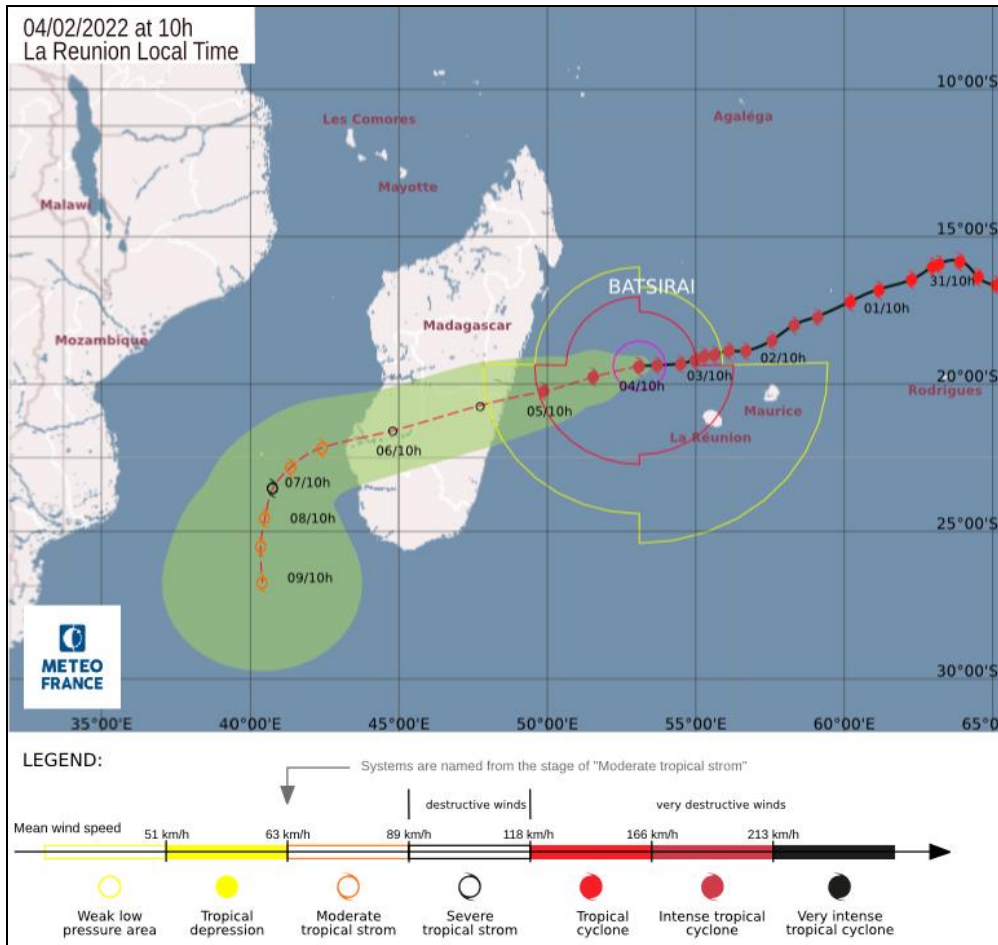


Figure 2: Forecast track for Batsirai, issued by Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre (RSMC) La Reunion on 4 February 08h00 SAST. Source RSMC Reunion

Batsirai is expected to continue on a south-westwards track towards central Madagascar (Fig. 2), where it will make landfall tomorrow (5 February) possibly at Intense Tropical Cyclone intensity. Ahead of landfall, inhabitants of Madagascar should start to experience the first signs of the approaching cyclone, with increased wave heights (8m, even reaching 15m) from today. There is also a very high likelihood of storm surge along the coastline as a result of this cyclone. Once overland, Batsirai is expected to rapidly decrease in intensity, however, significant impacts are still expected over the central and south-eastern parts of Madagascar. Strong and damaging winds as well as torrential rainfall is expected.

The latest track (Fig. 2) shows that once Batsirai enters the Mozambique Channel, it will intensify once again, however only reaching moderate tropical storm intensity and increasing to severe tropical storm intensity momentarily. The current forecast also suggests a direct southerly track which means the tropical storm is not expected to make landfall over mainland Africa.

Over South Africa, there has been a band of thundershowers over the western interior of the country earlier this week. These thundershowers are as a result of tropical moisture being drawn down from the tropics into South Africa. This band of showers is expected to move eastwards, affecting the eastern half of the country (Fig. 3). These showers are likely to be heavy in places, in particular along the east coast and adjacent interior tomorrow (Fig. 4b). Warnings for disruptive rainfall have been issued (Fig. 4) with

impacts expected including flooding of roads and settlements, displacement of affected communities, possible damage to roads and bridges and poor driving conditions.

It is important to note that the current thundershowers affecting South Africa are not linked to Tropical Cyclone Batsirai in any way.

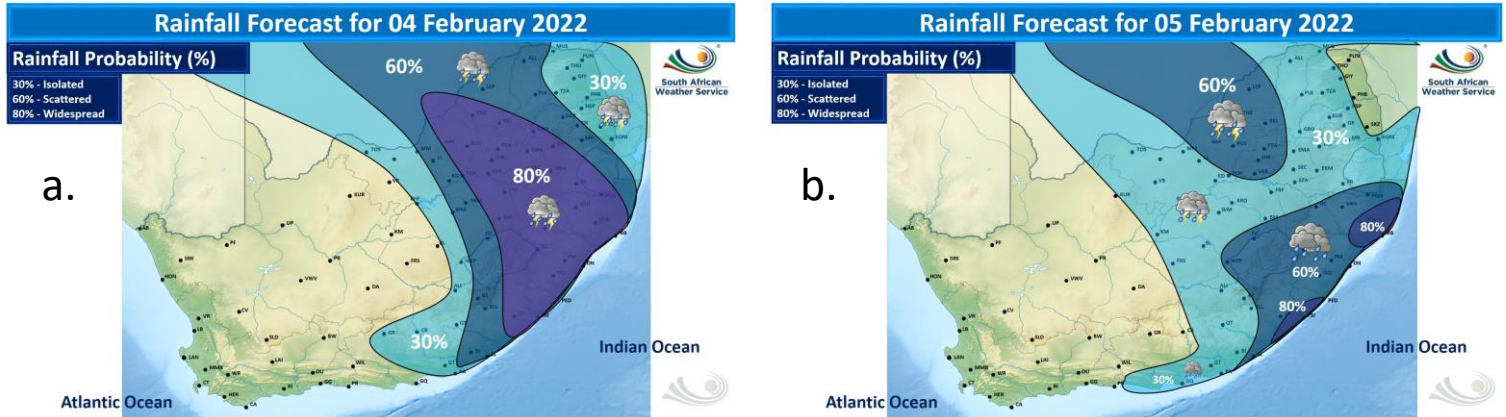


Figure 3: Forecast rainfall for today (a) and tomorrow (b)

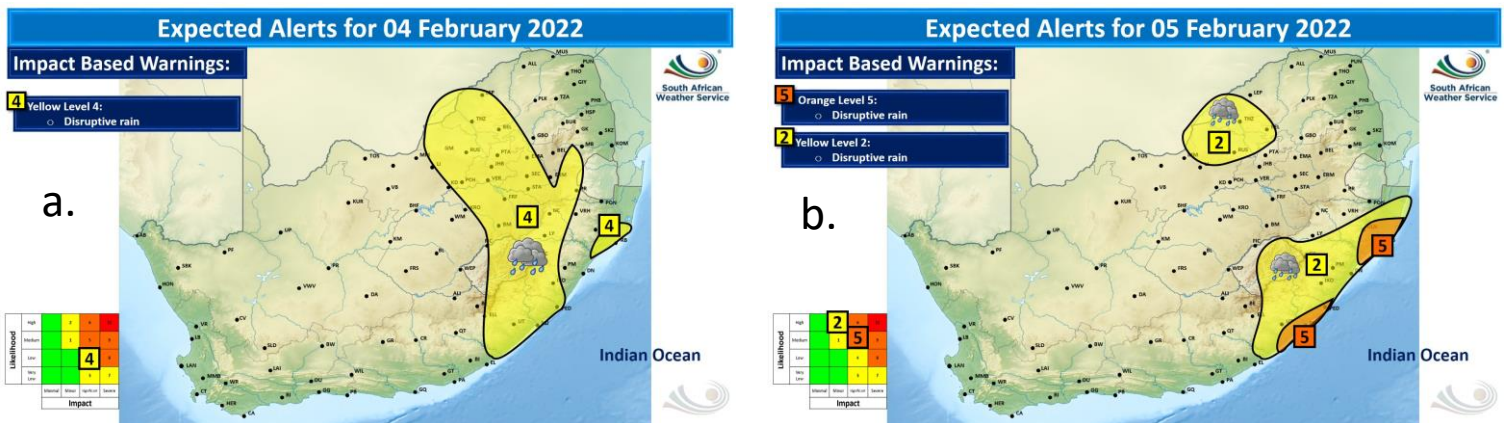


Figure 4: Warnings valid for today (a) and tomorrow (b)

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor the situation very closely and provide regular updates.

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