

Sunday, 10 March 2024

Tropical low in the Mozambique Channel

Currently, a weak tropical low-pressure system is positioned in the Mozambique Channel, between Mozambique and Madagascar (Figure 1). During the past week, the system has drifted slowly around the eastern and southern parts of the Mozambique Channel region, causing heavy thundery downpours over the eastern coastline of Madagascar. Thus far, surface winds in association with the system have not been particularly strong or damaging. In the days ahead, however, the system is expected to begin deepening and intensifying, as early as this evening. At this stage, the primary regions at risk are the southern coastal regions of Mozambique, southwards of Beira.

Figure 1 indicates the current position of the tropical disturbance, in the central part of the Mozambique Channel, roughly due east of the town of Beira. At 08h00SAST this morning, it was positioned at approximately 20.1 South 39.9 East. The central pressure in association with the system is still above 1000hPa, currently estimated to be 1005hPa and it is moving due west at approximately 11knots (20km/h).

Whilst there is still significant uncertainty amongst Numeric Weather Prediction (NWP) models regarding (a) the intensity and (b) future movement of the system, there is broad agreement, at least in the short term (covering the next 1 to 2 days), that the system will continue moving towards the central Mozambique coastline, whilst undergoing a steady but gradual intensification.

In the opinion of the Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre (RSMC) at La Reunion (the official source of guidance for tropical systems in the South West Indian Ocean region) the system may intensify sufficiently to attain Moderate Tropical Storm status (with sustained winds of 63 to 80km/h) as early as this evening.

The current predicted track for this system, prepared by RSMC La Reunion is provided in Figure 2 below. The curved, parabolic track suggests that the system is likely to be overland, over southern Mozambique during Tuesday, then exiting southern Mozambique near Xai-Xai on Wednesday. Whilst the eastern parts of South Africa are not expected to be directly affected by this system, the lowveld regions of Mpumalanga and Limpopo, as well as northern KwaZulu-Natal could experience a spell of windy, rainy weather in the period between Tuesday and Thursday this week. Further details in this regard will be provided by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) in subsequent, follow-up media releases.

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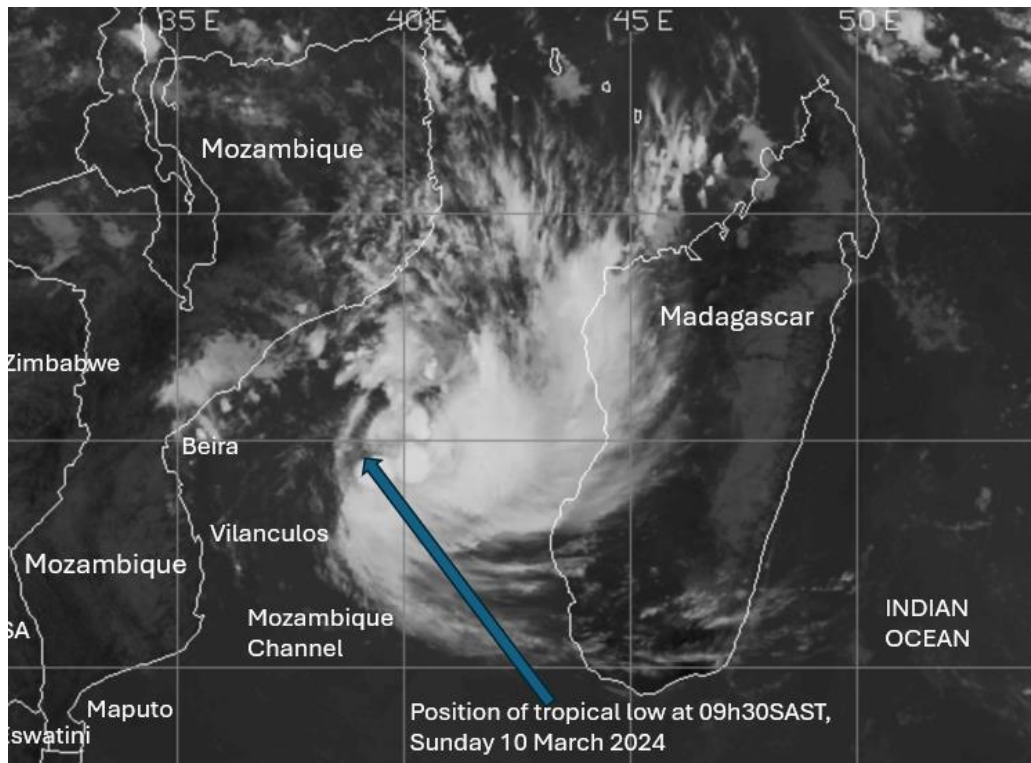


Figure 1: Meteosat geostationary satellite image in the infra-red (IR) channel, at 09h30SAST Sunday 10 March 2024 indicating the current position of the system, between Mozambique and Madagascar. Source: Eumetsat 2024.

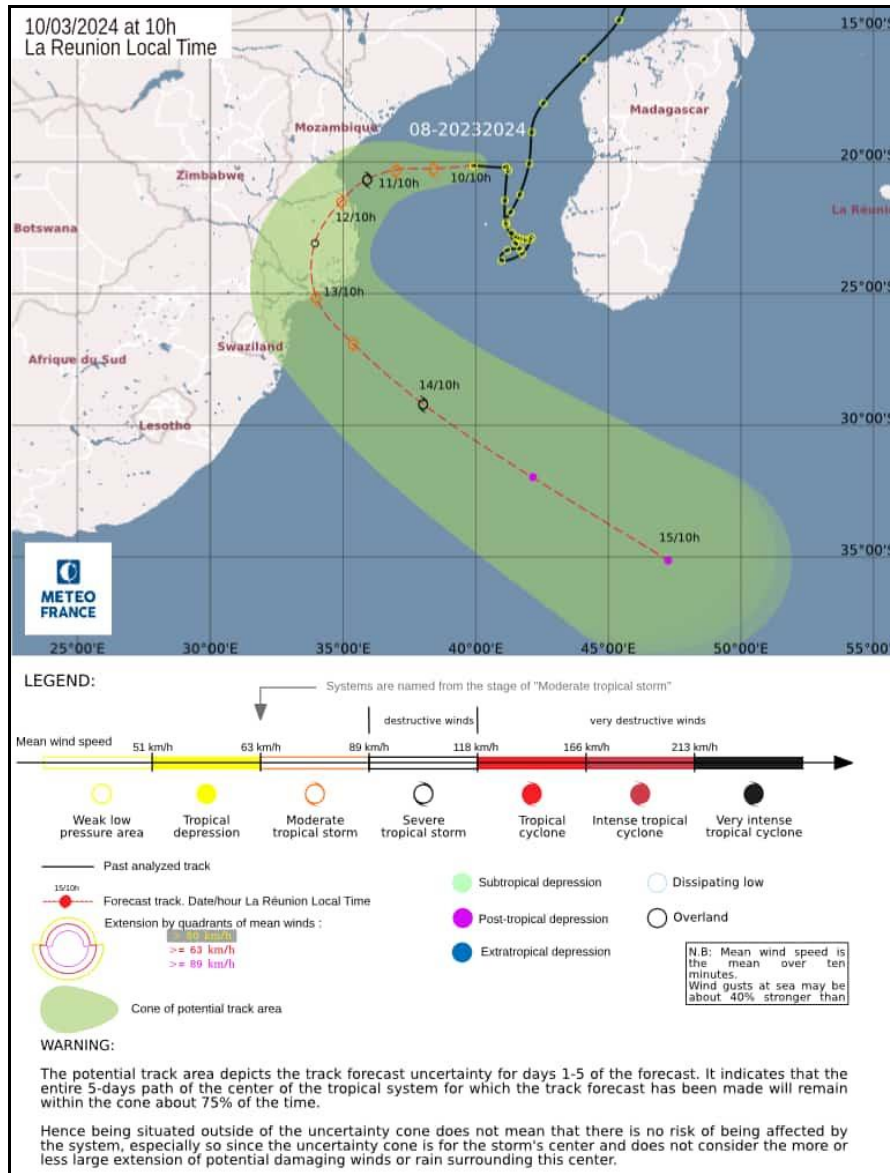


Figure 2: The current predicted track for the tropical low during the week ahead, as issued by RSMC La Reunion on Sunday 10 March 2024.

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor any further developments relating to this weather system and will issue subsequent updates as required. Furthermore, the public are urged and encouraged to regularly follow weather forecasts on television and radio. Updated information in this regard will regularly be available at www.weathersa.co.za as well as via the SA Weather Service X account @SAWeatherServic

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