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24 January 2022

First “named” tropical system of the 2021/2022 season for the South-West Indian Ocean region

Shortly before this past weekend, a tropical low began rapidly intensifying over the open ocean to the north-east of Madagascar, northwards of Mauritius and Reunion islands. There was much interest on the part of the meteorological community as well as the general public, as this system (provided it intensified sufficiently) was a strong candidate to be the first “named” tropical system within the South-West (SW) Indian Ocean basin.

As many would be aware, lists of names, arranged in alphabetical order, are compiled well ahead of time, for each ocean basin. South Africa, as a member of WMO Regional Area 1 (RA1) annually contributes to the compilation of the list for the SW Indian ocean region.

• Ana (<i>active</i>)	• Jasmine (<i>unused</i>)	• Savana (<i>unused</i>)
• Batsirai (<i>unused</i>)	• Karim (<i>unused</i>)	• Themba (<i>unused</i>)
• Cliff (<i>unused</i>)	• Letlama (<i>unused</i>)	• Uyapo (<i>unused</i>)
• Dumako (<i>unused</i>)	• Maipelo (<i>unused</i>)	• Viviane (<i>unused</i>)
• Emnati (<i>unused</i>)	• Njazi (<i>unused</i>)	• Walter (<i>unused</i>)
• Fezile (<i>unused</i>)	• Oscar (<i>unused</i>)	• Xangy (<i>unused</i>)
• Gombe (<i>unused</i>)	• Pamela (<i>unused</i>)	• Yemurai (<i>unused</i>)
• Halima (<i>unused</i>)	• Quentin (<i>unused</i>)	• Zanele (<i>unused</i>)
• Issa (<i>unused</i>)	• Rajab (<i>unused</i>)	



Figure 1: Alphabetical list of tropical cyclone names for the SW Indian Ocean, 2021-2022 season. Source: Wikipedia.org / La Reunion RSMC.

During the weekend, the system swirled gradually from east to west over central and northern Madagascar, temporarily losing intensity due to surface friction with the landmass, as well as the absence of the release of latent heat energy from the ocean surface (the main energy driver for tropical cyclones). On Sunday, the system intensified as it slid back into the warm, tropical waters of the Mozambique Channel, with the storm becoming more “organised” in structure.

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Overnight, the system continued to intensify, reaching Moderate Tropical Storm intensity in the early hours of Monday morning, leading to the official naming on “Ana”. The system consistently tracks predominantly westwards and by local sunrise this morning, was lying just off the northern Mozambican coastline, likely to soon make landfall today along the coast, between Angoche and Mogincual. As at 08h00 SAST today, the system was located at 16.5S 040.8E, still associated with sustained winds of at least 45 knots (85 km/h). As such, “ANA” has the potential to cause significant wind damage to coastal infrastructure along the Mozambican north coast. Moreover, the risk of marine storm surge and localised flooding, due to torrential downpours cannot be underestimated.

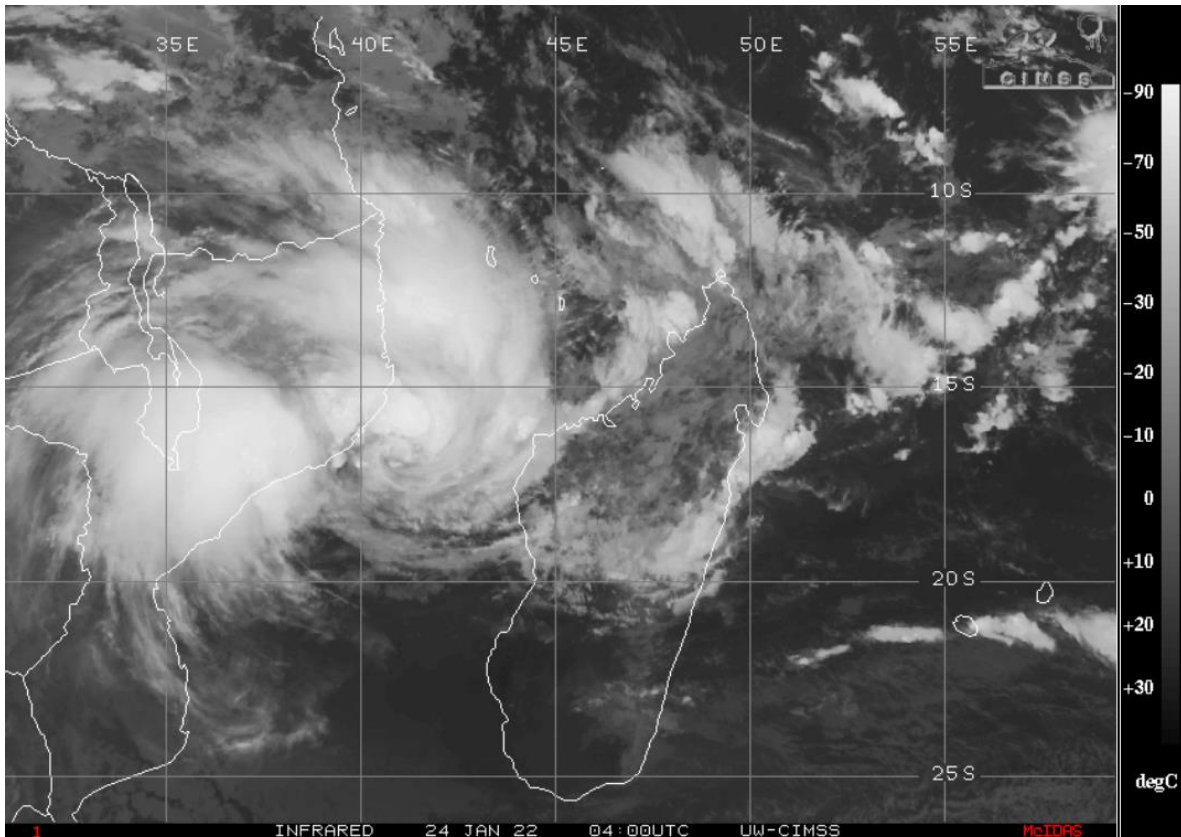


Figure 2: An infra-red satellite image of the Mozambique Channel, valid for 06h00SAST this morning, Monday 24 January 2022, showing the vortex of “ANA” lying just off the northern Mozambican coast. Source: UW-CIMSS.

The South African Weather Service (SAWS) would like to reassure the public at large that this particular system is not likely to directly affect South Africa at all in the coming days. With reference to Figure 3, one can see that the expected overland track of the remnants of “ANA” will continue to be along a predominantly westward path during the next 2 to 3 days, with the system moving towards lake Kariba.

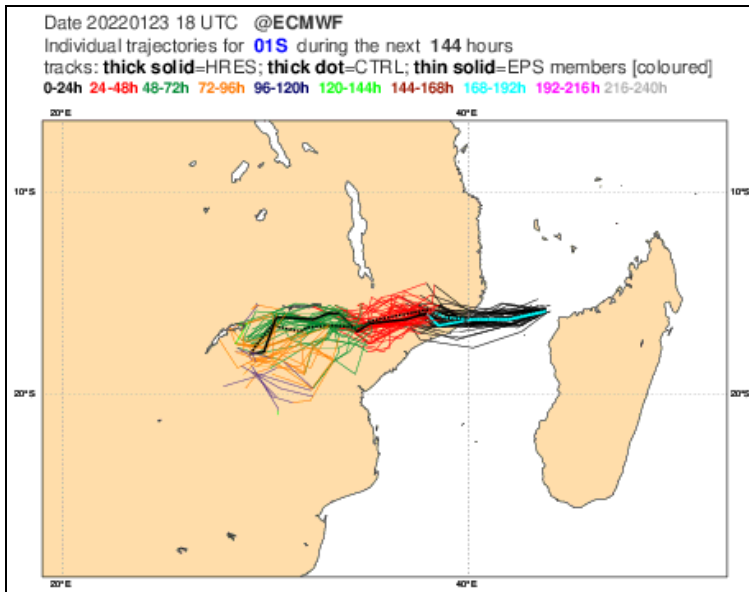


Figure 3: An ensemble of most likely tracks, generated by the ECMWF ensemble model, valid for “ANA” as it moves overland.
 Source: ECMWF.

The South African Weather Service will continue to closely monitor developments in this regard and will issue updates as and when necessary.

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