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Tuesday, 24 January 2023

Moderate Tropical Storm “Cheneso” emerges into the Mozambique Channel

Following the first announcement regarding “Cheneso” on Thursday, 19 January last week, “Cheneso” drifted over the interior of Madagascar during the weekend, weakening significantly in the process. Overnight however, “Cheneso” gradually migrated to the south-western Madagascan coast and started moving into the Mozambique Channel, away from the coastline of Madagascar. “Cheneso” is currently rated as a Moderate Tropical Storm, with an estimated surface pressure of 997 hPa. At 08h00 South African Standard Time (SAST) this morning “Cheneso” was positioned at 20.0 South 042.5 East, moving very slowly north-westwards at 6 km/h.

The latest numeric weather prediction (NWP) models, as well as guidance from the Regional Specialist Meteorological Centre (RSMC) at La Reunion Island, suggest that, given favourable conditions of low wind shear aloft, combined with very warm to hot sea surface temperature (SST) of 29°C, “Cheneso” is likely to continue to intensify in the coming days; with the potential to develop into an Intense Tropical Cyclone on or about Saturday, 28 January 2023.

It must, however be strongly emphasised that, given current guidance from numeric weather prediction (NWP) models, this system is NOT expected to directly affect South Africa in the coming days. It is also important to mention that, as with any tropical marine system, there is a much uncertainty regarding the future movement of the system, beyond a few days ahead in time.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned restrictions, the current consensus amongst meteorological agencies, as well as ensemble numeric weather prediction (NWP) models, is that “Cheneso” will continue to intensify, with average winds of about 50 knots (93 km/h) developing today in the vicinity of the vortex of the system. As the system deepens further, it is expected to

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adopt a more south-westerly path (as indicated in Figure 2), taking the system close to Europa Island, in the southern part of the Mozambique Channel by Saturday, 28 January. At this point in time, the system is likely to be at its most intense, associated with average winds of 80 knots (148 km/h) and wind gusts of 100 knots (185 km/h), when it is likely to be classified as an Intense Tropical Cyclone. Thereafter, a slight weakening in intensity is expected, with the system adopting a more southerly track, as it moves into extra-tropical waters.

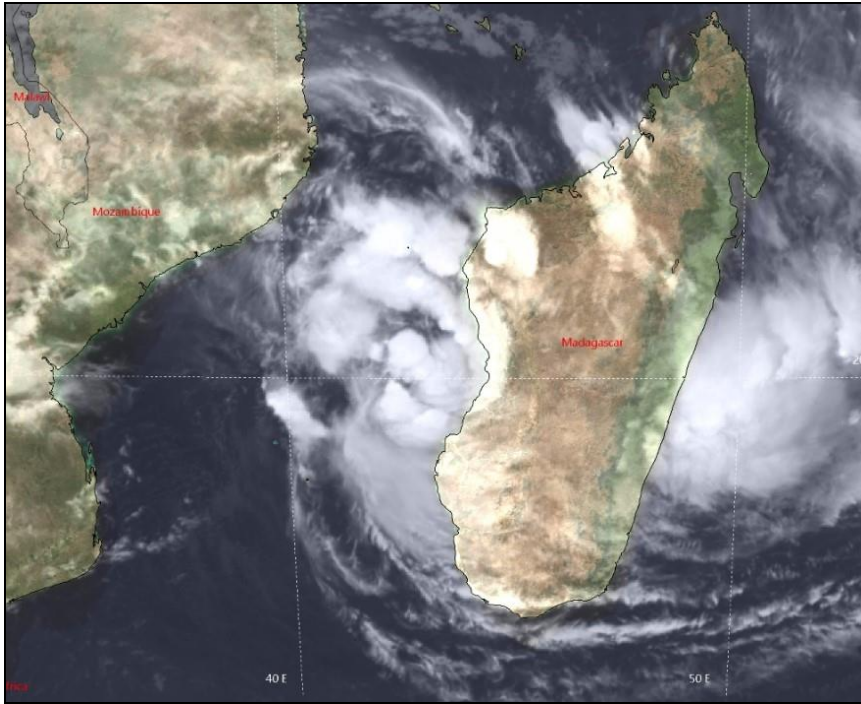


Figure 1: Satellite image of Moderate Tropical Storm “Cheneso” located over the eastern half of the Mozambique Channel at 02h00 SAST this morning. Mozambique is located to the left of the image. Image courtesy of the US Navy Joint Typhoon Warning Centre (JTWC) and Eumetsat (© Eumetsat 2023)

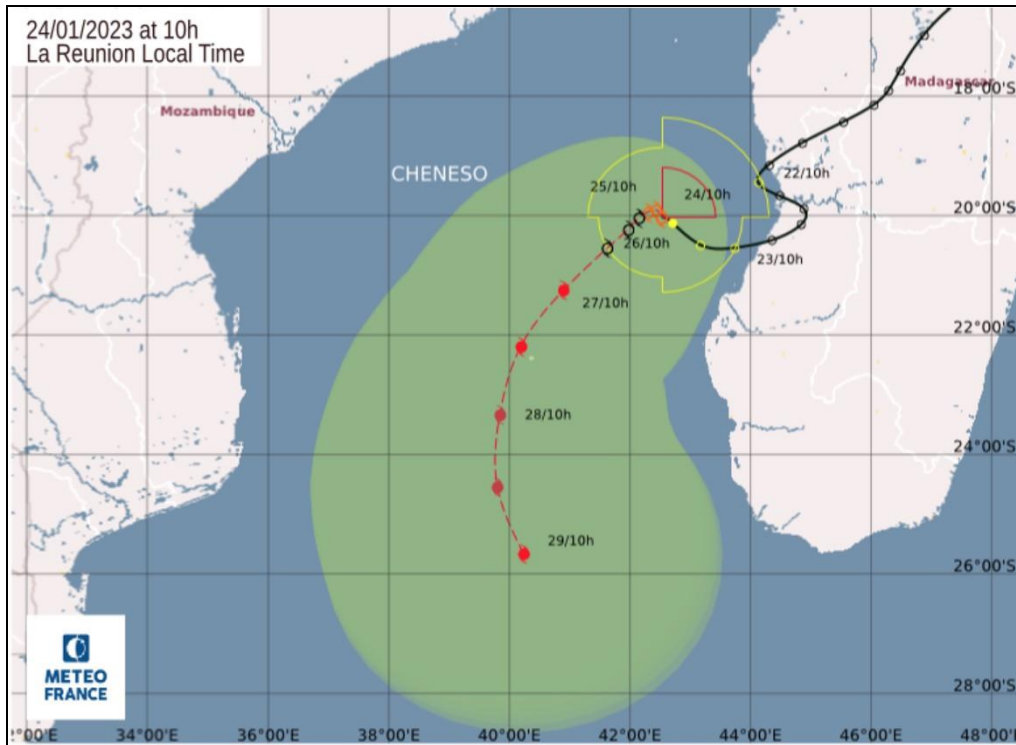


Figure 2: The latest projected track for “Cheneso”, issued by RSMC La Reunion at 08h00SAST this morning, Tuesday 24 January 2023. Source: WMO RSMC La Reunion

The South African Weather Service (SAWS) will continue to monitor this system and will issue further updates as and when required. **To reiterate, “Cheneso” poses no direct risk or threat to South Africa at the current time.**

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