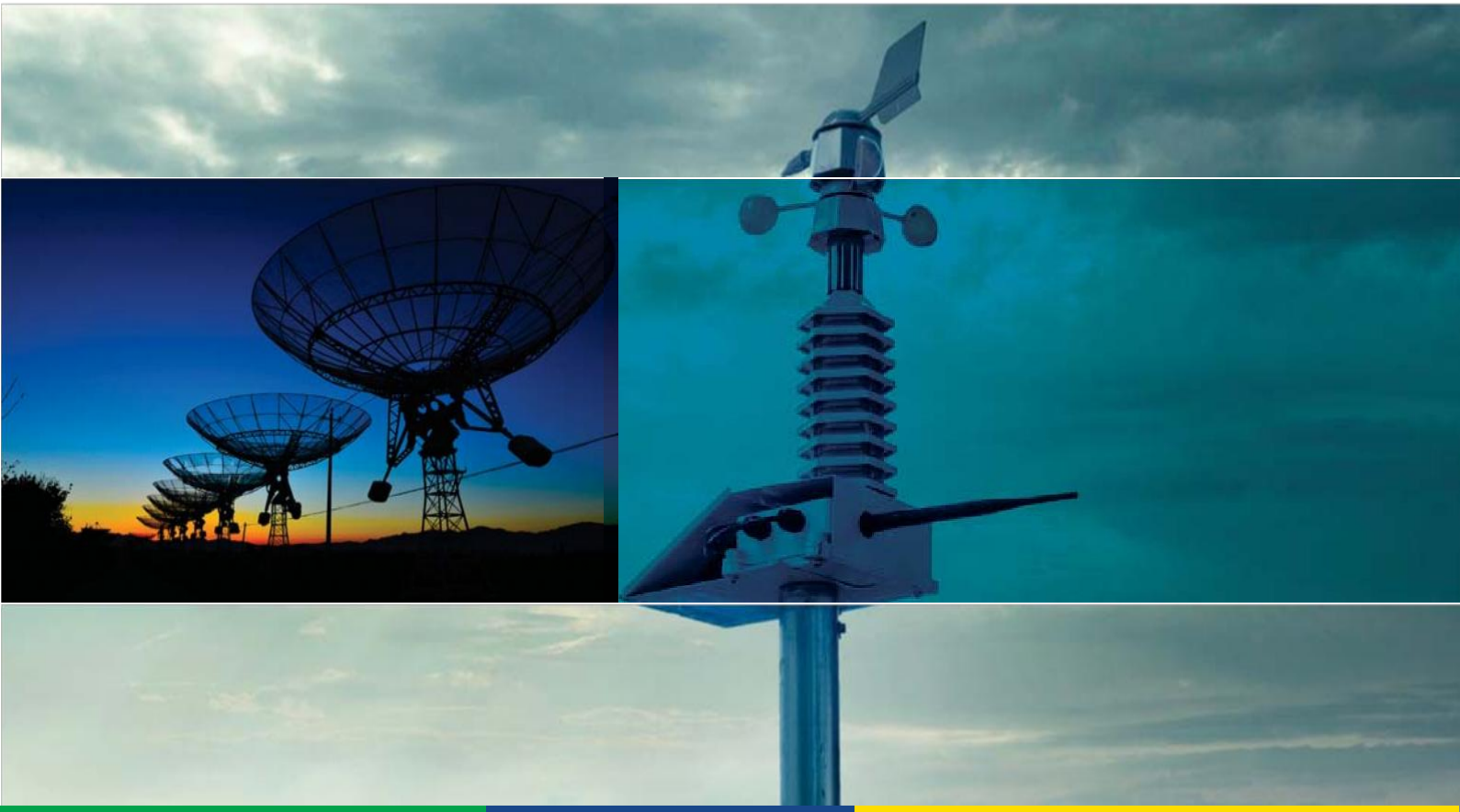
STATEMENT FROM THE THIRTY-FIRST SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORUM (SARCOF-31)

08 to 11 SEPTEMBER 2025, Lusaka, Zambia



STATEMENT FROM THE THIRTY-FIRST SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORUM (SARCOF-31) HELD IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, 08 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2025.

SUMMARY

Bulk of the SADC region is likely to receive normal to above-normal rainfall for most of the period of October to December (OND) 2025 except the western fringes of Namibia where below-normal rainfall is expected. The remainder of the region is likely to receive normal to below normal rainfall during this period of the 2025/26 season including the island states of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.

The period January to March (JFM) 2026 period is expected to have normal to above normal rainfall for most of the region except for northern parts of the region (Angola, DRC and Tanzania) where normal to below normal rainfall is expected. Above normal rainfall is expected in the southwestern parts of the region while the bulk of Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles are expected to receive normal to above rainfall with Comoros receiving normal to below normal rainfall during the JFM 2026 period.

Temperature outlook for the entire 2025/26 rainfall season indicates that temperatures are expected to be mostly above long-term averages over the whole of the SADC, except for central parts of the region.

INTRODUCTION

The Thirty-First Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-31) was held in hybrid mode from 08 to 11 September 2025 to present a consensus outlook for the 2025/2026 rainfall season over the SADC region. Climate Experts from the SADC National Meteorological and/or Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and the SADC Climate Services Centre (CSC) formulated this Outlook. Inputs were acquired from African Centre for Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD) and Global Producing Centres (GPCs) namely, European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecast (ECMWF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Beijing Climate Centre (BCC), Météo-France, Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), UK Met Office, World Meteorological Centre (WMC-Tokyo) and Korea Meteorological Agency (KMA). Inputs from International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) and National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) were also used in this work. This Outlook covers the major rainfall season from October 2025 to March 2026. The Outlook is presented in overlapping three-monthly periods as follows: October-November-December (OND) 2025; November-December-January (NDJ), December-January-February (DJF) and January-February-March 2026.

NOTE: *This Outlook is relevant only to seasonal (overlapping three-monthly) timescales and relatively large areas and may not fully account for all factors that influence regional and national climate variability, such as local and month-to-month variations (intra-seasonal). As such, it must not be interpreted as indicating probable rainfall anomalies at sub-regional, country-level and local spatial scales, and at shorter - sub-seasonal (monthly) time scales.*

Users are strongly advised to contact the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services for interpretation of this Outlook, additional guidance, and updates.

METHODOLOGY

Using statistical analysis, other climate prediction schemes and expert interpretation, the climate scientists determined likelihoods of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall for each area (Figures 1 to 4) for overlapping three-monthly periods i.e., October-November-December (OND), November-December-January (NDJ); and December-January-February (DJF) and January-February-March (JFM). Above-normal rainfall is defined as rainfall lying within the wettest third of recorded rainfall amounts recorded over the 1991-2020 period; below-normal is defined as within the driest third of rainfall amounts and normal is the middle third, centred on the climatological mean. Figures 5(a), 5(b), 5(c) and 5(d) show the Long-term (1971-2000) mean rainfall for October-November-December, November-December-January, December-January-February and January-February-March seasons, respectively, over SADC countries.

The climate scientists took into account oceanic and atmospheric factors that influence the climate over the SADC region. These include the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is currently in the Neutral phase. The ENSO is projected to reach a weak La Nina phase during the forecast period. Another driver affecting SADC's regional climate, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently in a neutral phase and is forecasted to transition into a negative phase and later return to neutral phase towards the end of the 2025-2026 rainfall season.

OUTLOOK

The period October to March is the main period of interest for this outlook for Southern Africa. Owing to the differences and evolution patterns in the predominant rainfall-bearing systems, the rainy season has been subdivided into four overlapping three-month periods (i.e., OND, NDJ, DJF and JFM as defined below).

FIGURE CAPTION

It is emphasised that boundaries between zones should be considered as transition areas. Outlook information is provided only for countries that comprise the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region.

The colours for each zone indicate four forecast categories (above normal, normal to above normal, normal to below normal and below normal) representing different probabilities of rainfall anomalies.

The first colour (blue) indicates that the above normal rainfall has the highest probability of occurring.

The second colour (cyan) indicates the highest probability of normal rainfall, but with increased probability of above normal.

The third colour (yellow) indicates the highest probability of normal rainfall but with increased chance for below-normal rainfall.

The last colour (brown) indicates that below normal rainfall has the highest probability of occurring.

In addition to forecast categories, the outlook maps present information about forecast confidence. This has been derived based on 1) level of agreement of various forecasting approaches in terms of direction and magnitude of forecasted anomalies, 2) ability of these approaches to correctly predict anomalies during previous forecasts and 3) level of confidence in the forecast expressed by the forecasters based on their knowledge and understanding of the regional climate system. Increased level of confidence in the forecast reflects the higher likelihood that the forecast is correct.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

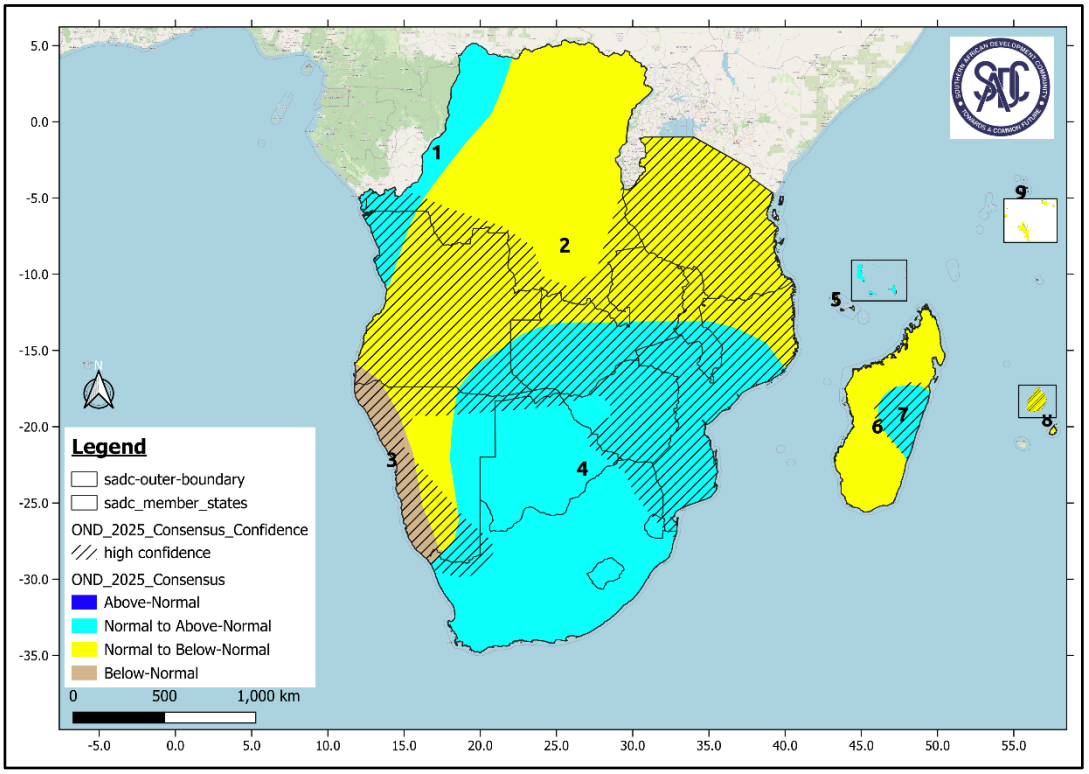


Figure 1: Rainfall forecast for October-November-December 2025

Zone 1: Western Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and northwestern Angola
Increased chances of above normal rainfall

Zone 2: Central DRC, most of Angola, central Namibia, northern Zambia, northern Malawi, Tanzania and northern Mozambique.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 3: Western Namibia, southwestern Angola and northwestern South Africa.
Increased chances of below normal rainfall (High Confidence)

Zone 4: Eastern Namibia, Botswana, southwestern Angola, southern Zambia, southern Malawi, Zimbabwe, most of Mozambique, South Africa Lesotho and Eswatini.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall (High Confidence)

Zone 5: Comoros.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 6: Bulk of Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 7: Central eastern Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall (High Confidence)

Zone 8: Mauritius.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High Confidence)

Zone 9: Seychelles.
Normal rainfall with increased chances below-normal rainfall

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025-JANUARY 2026

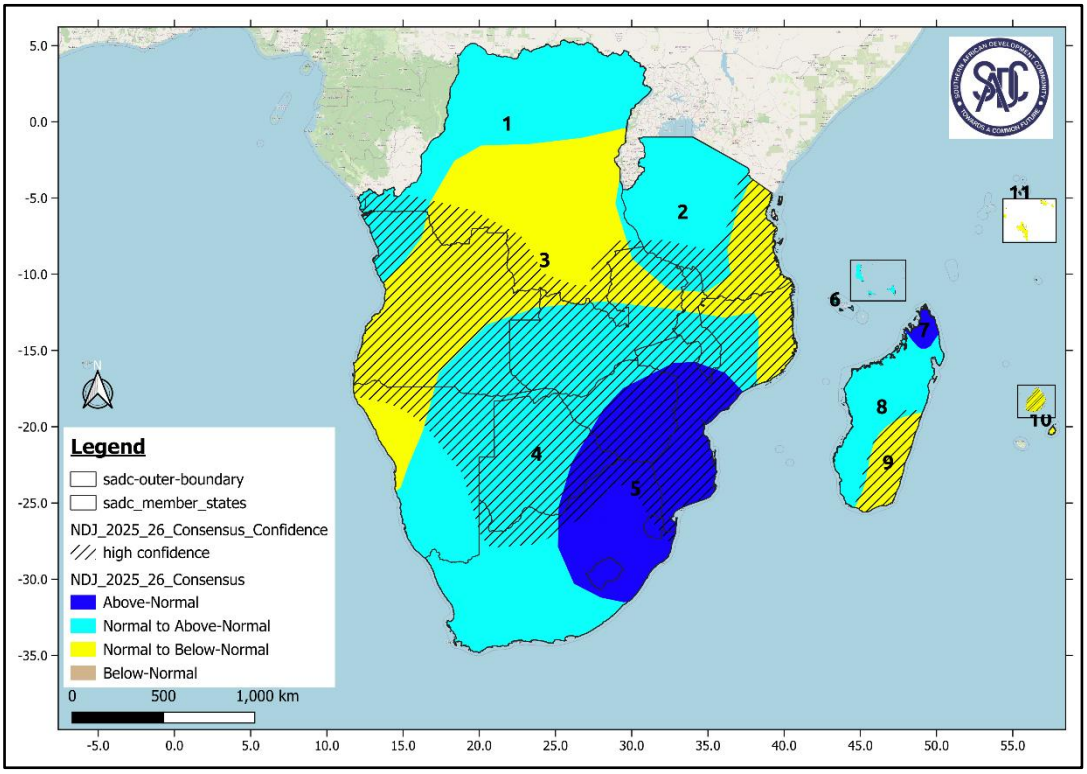


Figure 2: Rainfall forecast for November-December 2025, January 2026

Zone 1: Western and northern DRC and north-western Angola.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 2: Extreme southeastern DRC, most of Tanzania, northern most of Zambia and extreme northern Malawi
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 3: Central to south-western Angola, northwestern Namibia, most of central DRC, northern Zambia, northern Malawi, east coastal Tanzania, and Northeastern Mozambique.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 4: Bulk of Zambia, southern Malawi, northwestern Mozambique, northwester Zimbabwe, bulk of Botswana, bulk of Namibia and bulk of western South Africa.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High Confidence)

Zone 5: Bulk of eastern South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, eastern Botswana, bulk of Zimbabwe, southern tip of Malawi and most of Mozambique.
Increased chances of above normal rainfall

Zone 6: Comoros.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 7: Northern-extreme of Madagascar
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 8: Southwestern and north-central Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 9: Southeastern Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 10: Mauritius.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 11: Seychelles.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

DECEMBER 2025, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026

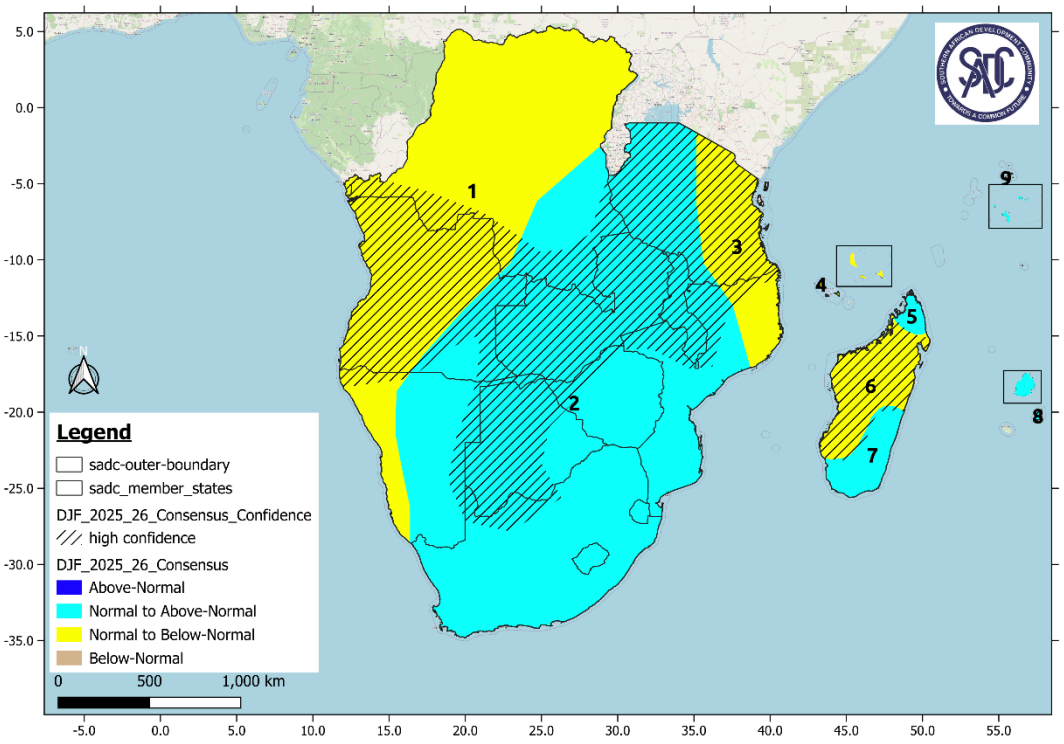


Figure 3: Rainfall forecast for December 2025, January-February 2026

Zone 1: Bulk of DRC, Angola and western fringes of Namibia.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 2: Eastern half of Tanzania, southernmost DRC, Malawi, Zambia, most of Mozambique, southeastern Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 3: Eastern half of Tanzania and most of northeastern Mozambique.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 4: Comoros.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 5: Northern Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 6: Central Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 7: Southern Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 8: Mauritius.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 9: Seychelles.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2026

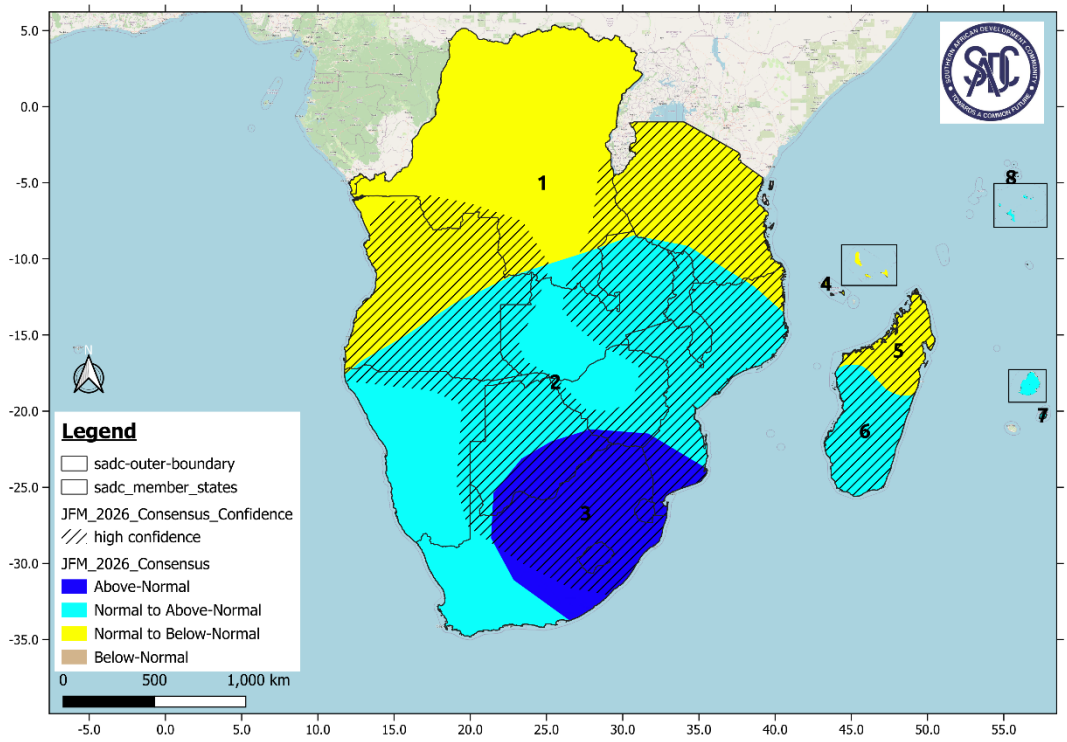


Figure 4: Rainfall forecast for January-February-March 2026

Zone 1: DRC, Angola, northern tip of Zambia and Tanzania.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 2: Southern DRC, southeastern Angola, most of Zambia, Malawi, most of Mozambique, most of Zimbabwe, most of Botswana, Namibia and western South Africa
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall (Confidence)

Zone 3: Southeastern Botswana, extreme south of Zimbabwe, most of South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini and southern Mozambique.
Increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 4: Comoros.
Increased chances of below normal rainfall

Zone 5: Northern Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of below-normal rainfall

Zone 6: Bulk of Madagascar.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 7: Mauritius.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

Zone 8: Seychelles.
Normal rainfall with increased chances of above-normal rainfall

OVERVIEW OF DYNAMICAL MODELS FORECAST FROM GLOBAL PRODUCING CENTRES

The above presented rainfall outlook is broadly consistent with the forecasts generated with the multi-model ensemble of international dynamical climate forecast models presented by the World Meteorological Organization Lead Centre. In summary, increased probability of normal to above normal conditions is forecasted consistently across the October to March 2025/26 period with an exception in the bulk of the northern parts of SADC region (Angola, DRC, Tanzania and parts of Zambia and Mozambique) where an increased probability of normal to below normal conditions during the December 2025 to February 2026 (DJF) period is forecasted. The forecasted probabilities are broadly consistent with the known influence of La Niña on the regional climate of Southern Africa.

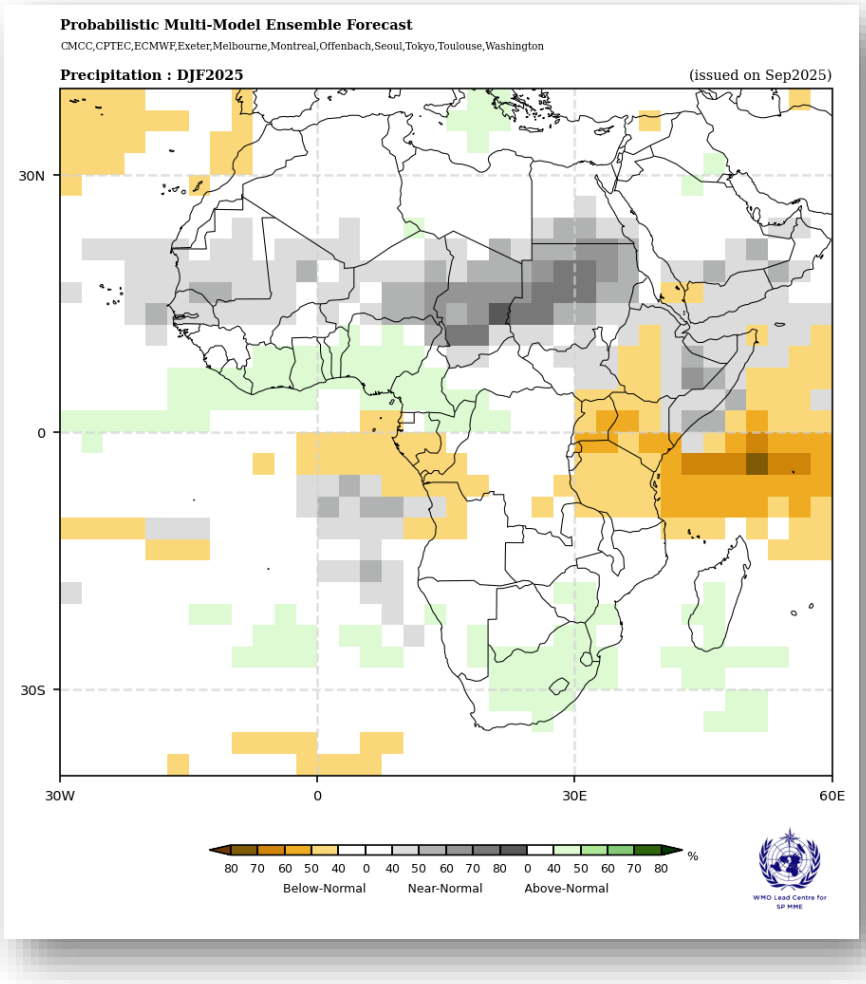
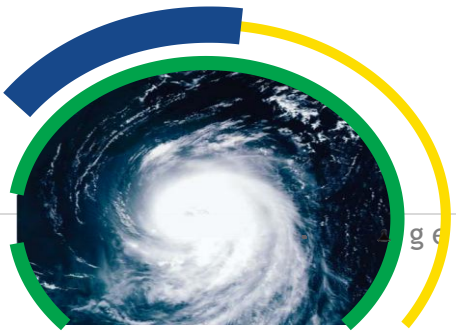


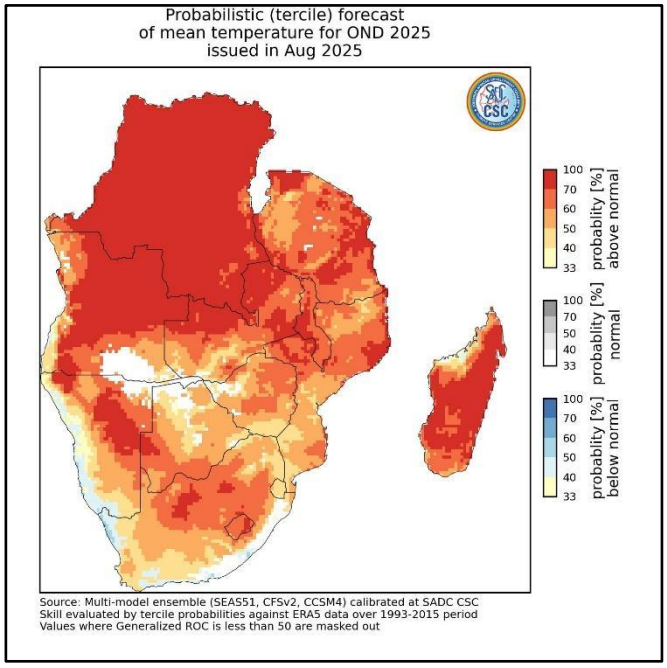
Figure 5: WMO Lead Centre Seasonal outlook for December 2025 to February 2026



TEMPERATURE OUTLOOK

The period October to March is the main period of interest for this outlook for Southern Africa. Temperature outlook covering the period from October 2025 to January 2026 indicates a high likelihood for above normal temperatures in most parts of the region, except central parts where cooler than usual temperatures are expected.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025-JANUARY 2026

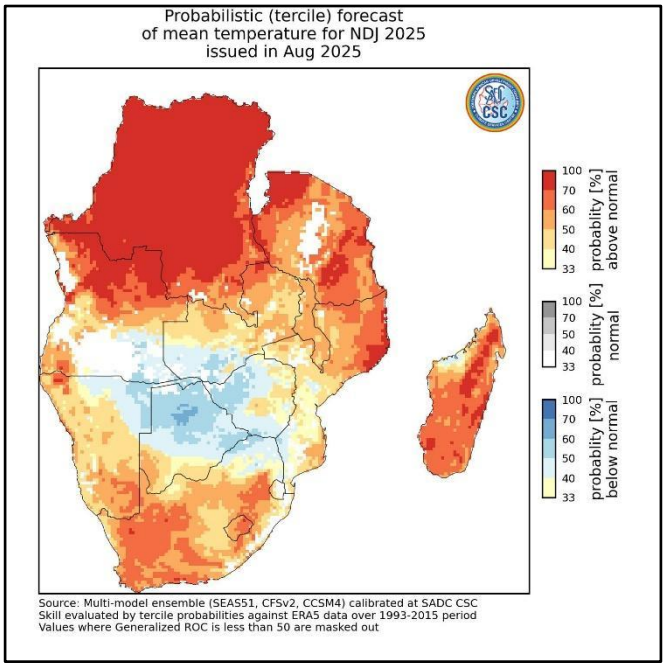
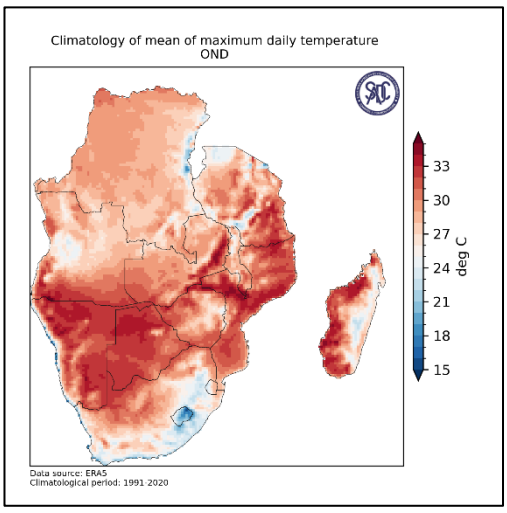


Figure 6, Mean temperature outlook over SADC countries (a) October-November-December and (b) November-December-January (1991-2020).

LONG-TERM MEAN SEASONAL RAINFALL (1991-2020)



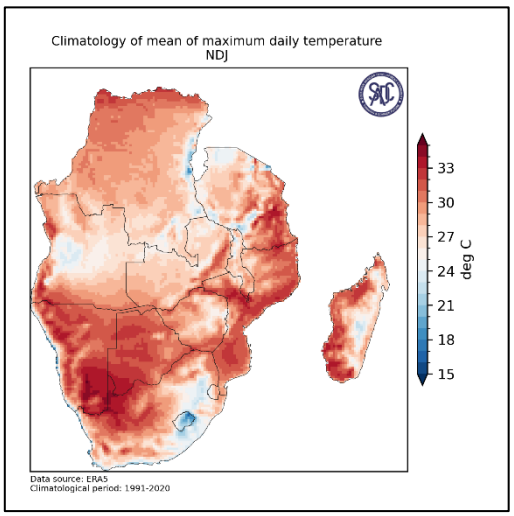


Figure 7, Long-term mean maximum temperature over SADC countries (a) October-November-December and (b) November-December-January (1991-2020).

LONG-TERM MEAN SEASONAL RAINFALL (1991-2020)

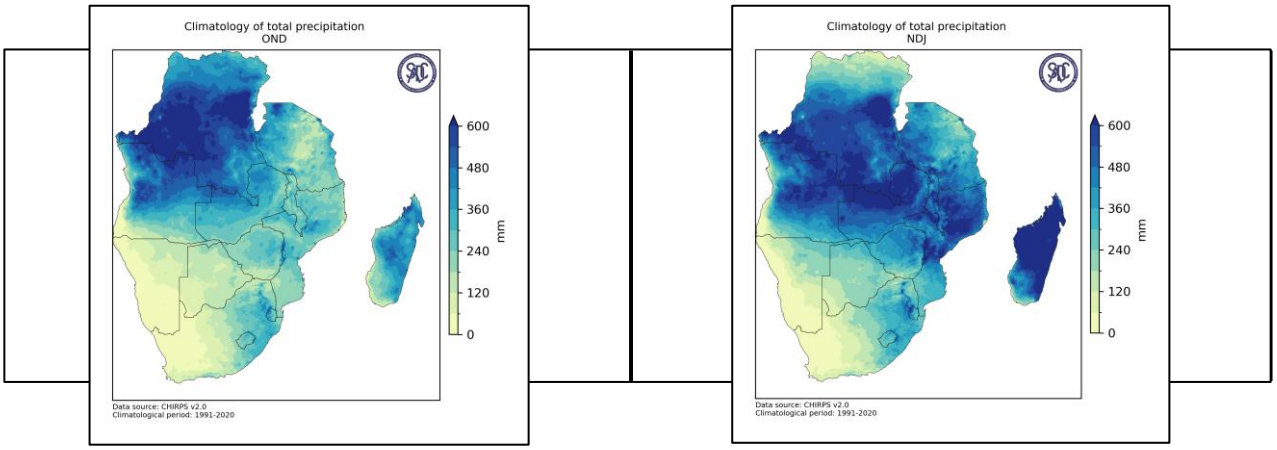


Figure 8, Long-term mean rainfall over SADC countries (a) October-November-December and (b) November-December-January (1991-2020).

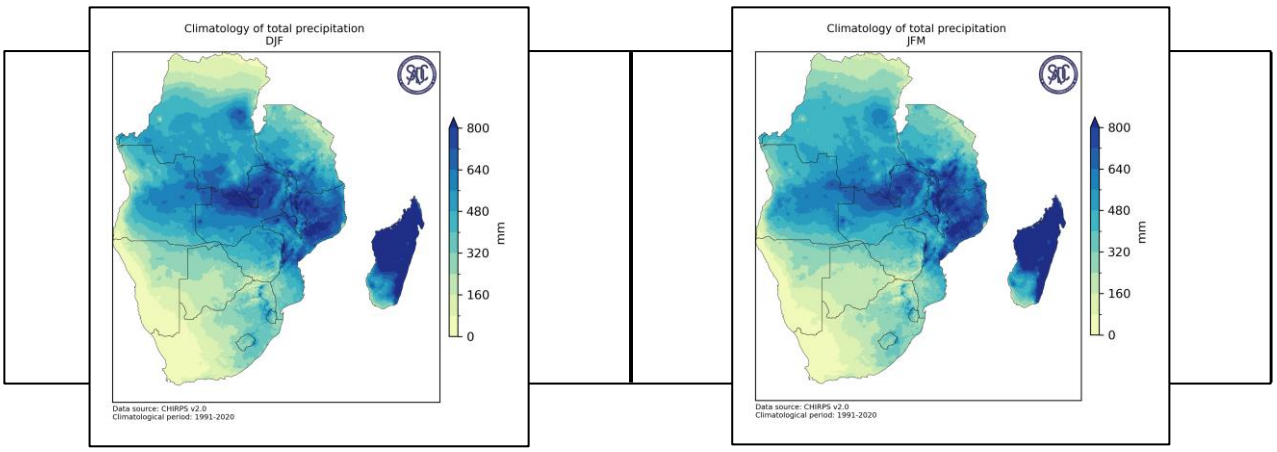


Figure 8, Long-term mean rainfall over SADC countries (c) December-January-February and (d) January-February-March (1991-2020).

The long-term median rainfall for October-November-December (Figure 8(a)), increases from Southwest to Northeast over contiguous SADC in either case. Over Madagascar the rains increase from West to East, while the rains are more uniformly distributed in Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles. The November- December-January long-term median total rainfall (Figure 8(b)) shows maxima of above 500 millimetres over much of Malawi, Zambia, Angola, southern half of DRC, central and Northern Mozambique as well as Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles. The remainder of the region receives rainfall less than 400 millimetres gradually decreasing south-westwards to southwest of South Africa and Namibia where the median rainfall is below 100 millimetres.

The long-term median for December-January-February rainfall (Figure 8(c)) shows maxima of above 600 millimetres over much of Malawi, Zambia, Angola, southern half of DRC, central and northern Mozambique as well as Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles. The remainder of the region receives rainfall less than 400 millimetres gradually decreasing south-westwards to southwest South Africa and Namibia where the median rainfall is below 100 millimetres. For January-February-March rainfall (Figure 8(d)) shows maxima of above 600 millimetres over much of Malawi and upper parts of the region.

SPONSORSHIP

The Thirty-first Southern Africa Climate Outlook Forum Update was hosted in Harare, Zimbabwe with support from SADC Member States, European Union through the Intra-ACP Climate Services, and related Applications (ClimSA) project, and other partners such as WFP and UK Met Wiser Project.

European Union

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