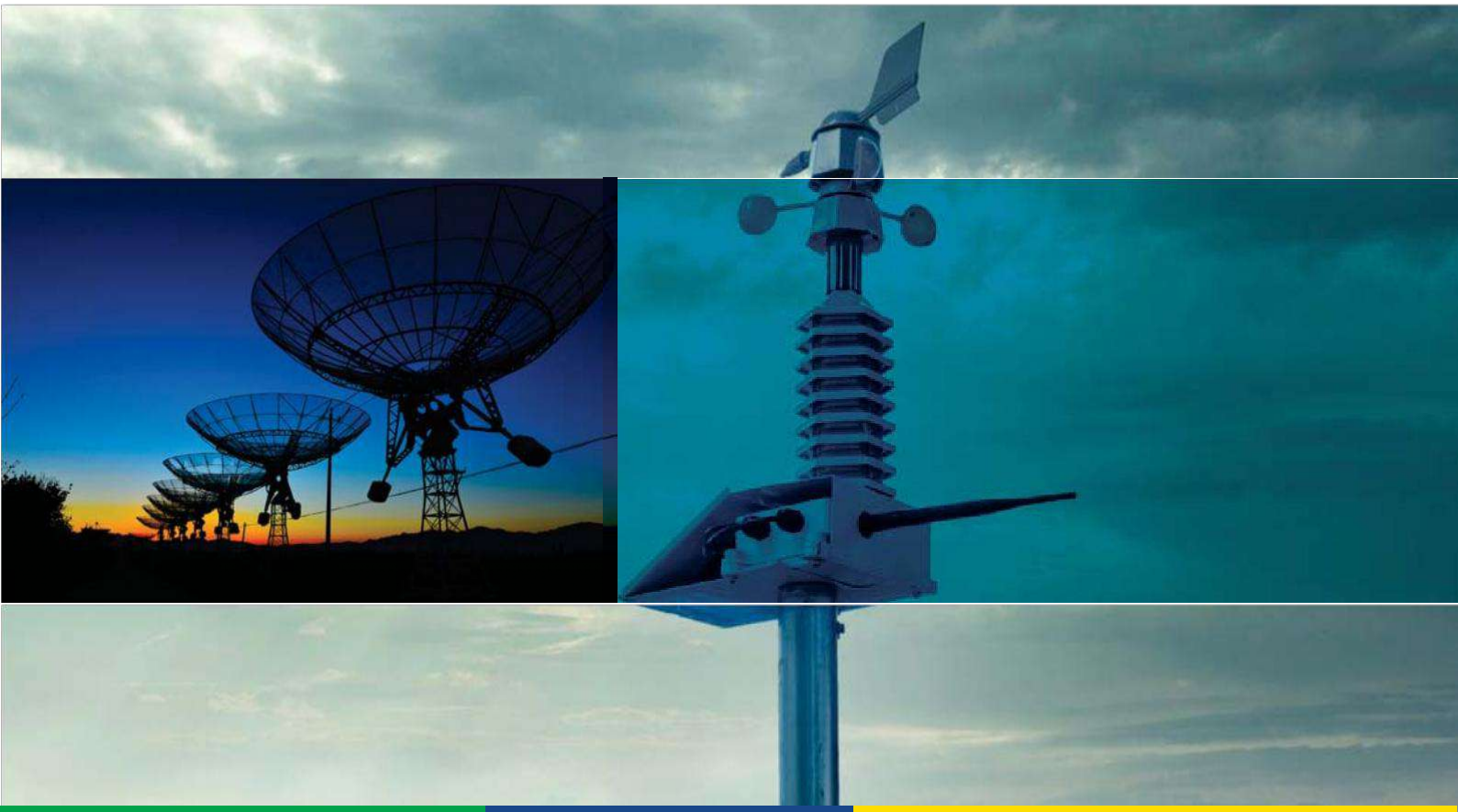
STATEMENT FROM THE THIRTY- THIRD SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORUM (SARCOF-33)

25 to 28 August 2026, Swakopmund, Namibia



OUTLOOK FORUM (SARCOF-33) HELD IN SWAKOPMUND, NAMIBIA, 25 – 28 AUGUST 2026.

SUMMARY

The bulk of the SADC region is likely to receive below-normal rainfall during October–November–December (OND) 2026. However, normal to above-normal rainfall is expected over most of the DRC, northwestern Angola, northern Zambia, central Malawi, northern Mozambique, the southern fringes of Tanzania and Comoros, while above-normal rainfall is expected over eastern DRC, most of Tanzania, extreme northern Malawi, extreme northern Zambia, and Seychelles. Normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over the southwestern coastal part of South Africa, southwestern Madagascar and Mauritius.

The January to March (JFM) 2027 period is expected to have below-normal rainfall over most of the central and southern parts of the SADC region, particularly across Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and parts of South Africa. Normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over parts of southern Mozambique, northern South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho and Madagascar. In contrast, normal to above-normal rainfall is expected over northern parts of the region, including the DRC, northern Zambia, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, parts of Tanzania and Seychelles, with above-normal rainfall particularly favoured over eastern Tanzania and the Comoros. Normal to below normal in the north and western parts of Madagascar, while normal to above normal is expected in the southeastern parts. Mauritius is expected to experience normal to above-normal rainfall.

The temperature outlook for the period of October-2026 to January 2027 indicates an above the normal temperature over most of the SADC region, except for central to northeastern parts where below normal temperatures are expected.

INTRODUCTION

The Thirty-Third Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-33), hosted with the support of the Government of the Republic of Namibia, was held in hybrid mode in Swakopmund, Namibia, from 25 to 28 August 2026 to develop a consensus climate outlook for the 2026/27 rainfall season over the SADC region. Climate experts from the SADC National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and the SADC Climate Services Centre (CSC) formulated the outlook. Inputs were obtained from the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) and Global Producing Centres (GPCs), namely the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (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 Administration (KMA). Inputs from the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) and National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) were also considered. The outlook covers the main rainfall season from October 2026 to March 2027 and is presented in four overlapping three-month periods: October–November–December (OND) 2026; November–December 2026–January 2027 (NDJ); December 2026–January–February 2027 (DJF); and January–February–March (JFM) 2027.

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 8(a), (b), (c) and (d) show the Long-term (1991-2020) mean rainfall for October-November-December, November-December-January, December-January-February and January-February-March seasons, respectively, over SADC region.

Climate scientists considered key oceanic and atmospheric drivers that influence rainfall variability over the SADC region. El Nino conditions are currently established in the tropical Pacific and are expected to strengthen further, with most models indicating a strong to very strong event, and peak intensity expected around the OND 2026 period. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently neutral; however, the latest model guidance indicates a high likelihood of a strong positive IOD developing by September 2026 and persisting through OND, before weakening towards neutral conditions during early 2027.

OUTLOOK

The October 2026 to March 2027 period constitutes the main rainfall season over much of the SADC region. To account for the spatial and temporal evolution of the predominant rainfall-bearing systems during the season, the outlook is presented in four overlapping three-month periods: October–November–December (OND), November–December–January (NDJ), December–January–February (DJF) and January–February–March (JFM).

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 African Development Community (SADC) region.

The colours on the maps represent four forecast categories based on the relative probabilities of above-normal, normal and below-normal rainfall. Blue indicates that above-normal rainfall has the highest probability of occurrence. Cyan indicates that normal rainfall has the highest probability, with an increased probability of above-normal rainfall. Yellow indicates that normal rainfall has the highest probability, with an increased probability of below-normal rainfall. Brown indicates that below-normal rainfall has the highest probability of occurrence.

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 2026

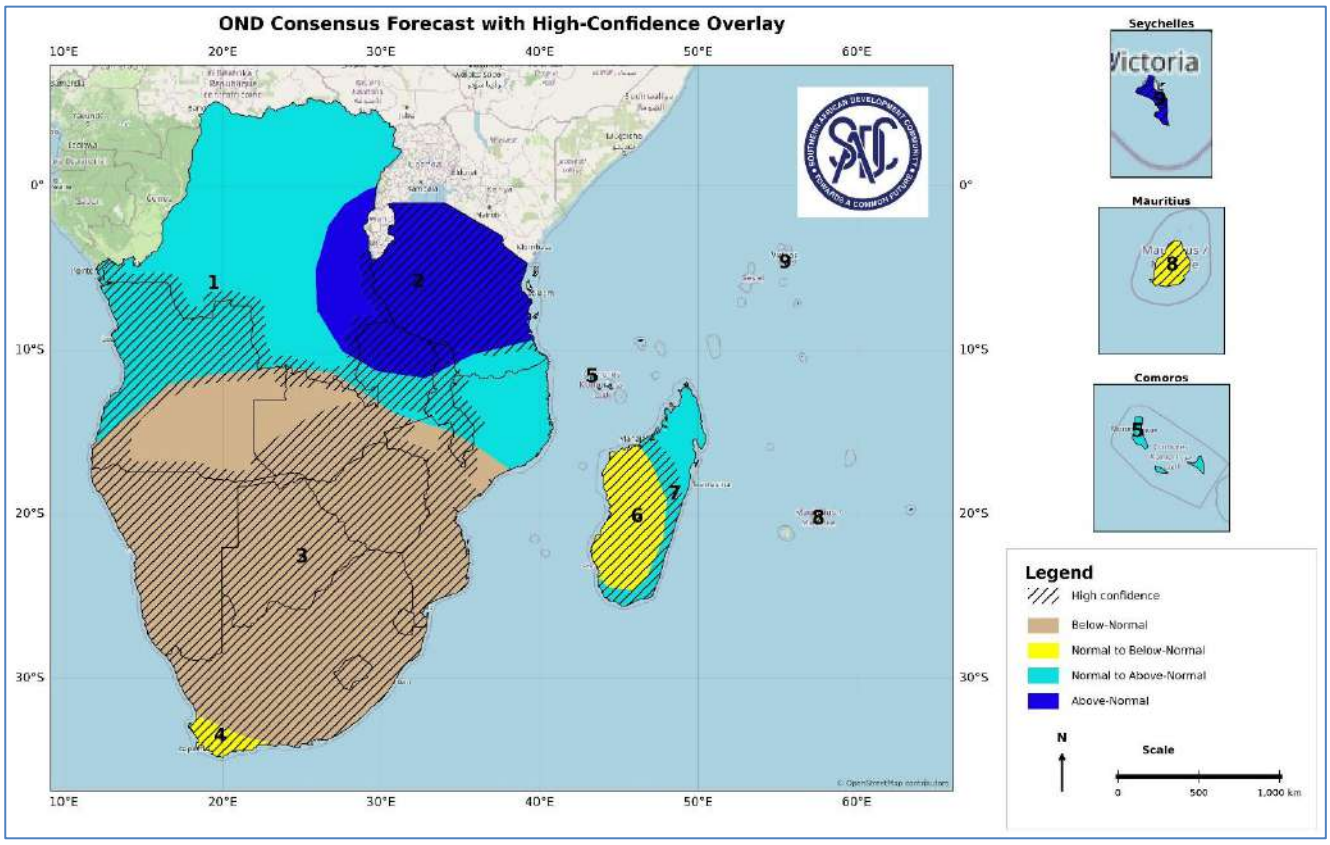


Figure 1: Rainfall forecast for October-November-December 2026

Zone 1: Most of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), northwestern Angola, northern Zambia, central Malawi and northern Mozambique, as well as the southern fringes of Tanzania.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 2: Eastern DRC, most of Tanzania, the extreme northern part of Malawi, extreme northern part of Zambia.
Increased chances of above-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 3: Much of Angola, southern Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, most of South Africa, Eswatini and Lesotho.
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 4: Southwestern coastal South Africa.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 5: Comoros.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 6: Western and southwestern Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 7: North and Eastern Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 8: Mauritius.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 9: Seychelles.
Increased chances of above-normal rainfall (**High confidence**)

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026-JANUARY 2027

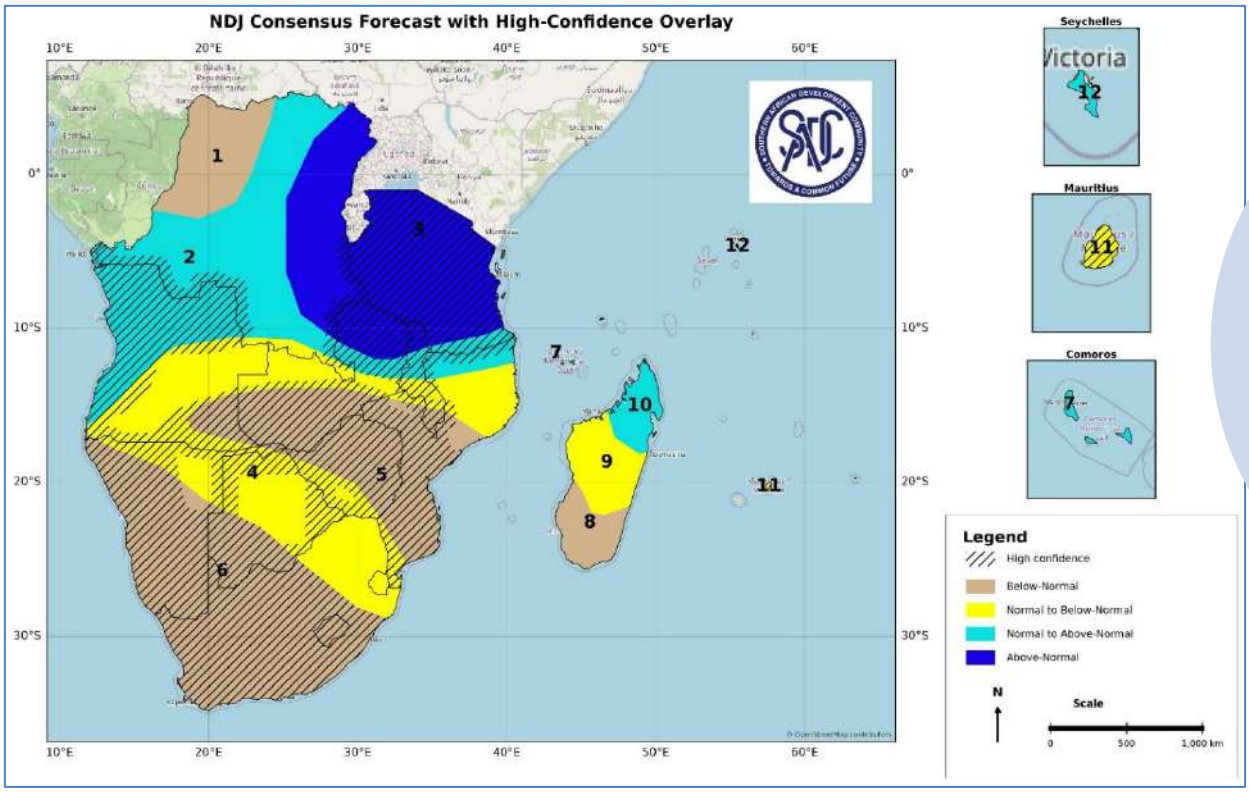


Figure 2: Rainfall forecast for November-December 2026, January 2027

Zone 1: Northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall.

Zone 2: Most of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), northern Angola, a narrow band across northern Zambia, central Malawi, southern fringes of Tanzania and the northern fringes of Mozambique.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 3: Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), northern Zambia, northern Malawi and much of Tanzania.
Increased chances of above-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 4: Southern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), central Angola, central stripe of Zambia, central Malawi, northern and southern fringes Mozambique, northeastern Namibia, northern Botswana, southwestern Zimbabwe, northeastern South Africa and Eswatini.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall.

Zone 5: Southeastern Angola, southern Zambia, southern Malawi, much of Zimbabwe and much of Mozambique.
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 6: Most of Namibia, southern Botswana, most of South Africa and Lesotho.
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 7: Comoros.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 8: Southern Madagascar.
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall.

Zone 9: Central Madagascar
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall.

Zone 10: Northern Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 11: Mauritius.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 12: Seychelles.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

DECEMBER 2026, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2027

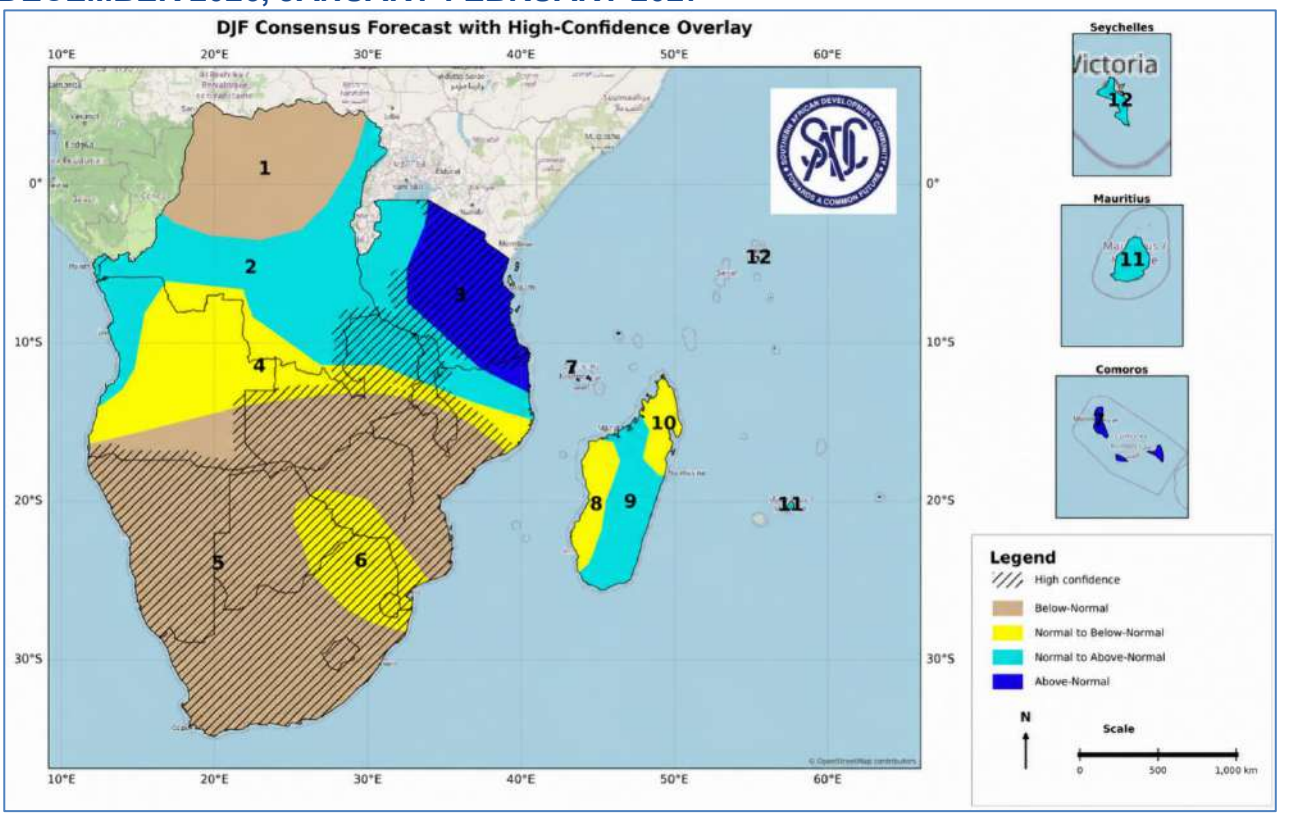


Figure 3: Rainfall forecast for December 2026, January-February 2027

Zone 1: Northern DRC.
Increased chances of below normal rainfall

Zone 2: Western half of Tanzania, Most of DRC, northern part of Mozambique, northern Malawi, Northern Zambia, extreme western Angola
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 3: Eastern half of Tanzania, extreme northern Mozambique.
Increased chances of above-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 4: Most of Angola, extreme southern DRC, central Zambia, central Malawi, and some parts of northern Mozambique
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall

Zone 5: Southern Angola, southern Zambia, bulk of Zimbabwe, southern Malawi, most of Central Mozambique, Namibia, bulk of Botswana, most of South Africa and Lesotho.
Increased chances of below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 6: Eastern Botswana, southern Zimbabwe, northern South Africa, Eswatini and southern fringes of Mozambique.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall (High confidence).

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

Zone 8: Western Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall.

Zone 9: Eastern, southern, central and central west of Madagascar
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 10: Northeastern Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall.

Zone 11: Mauritius.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

Zone 12: Seychelles.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2027

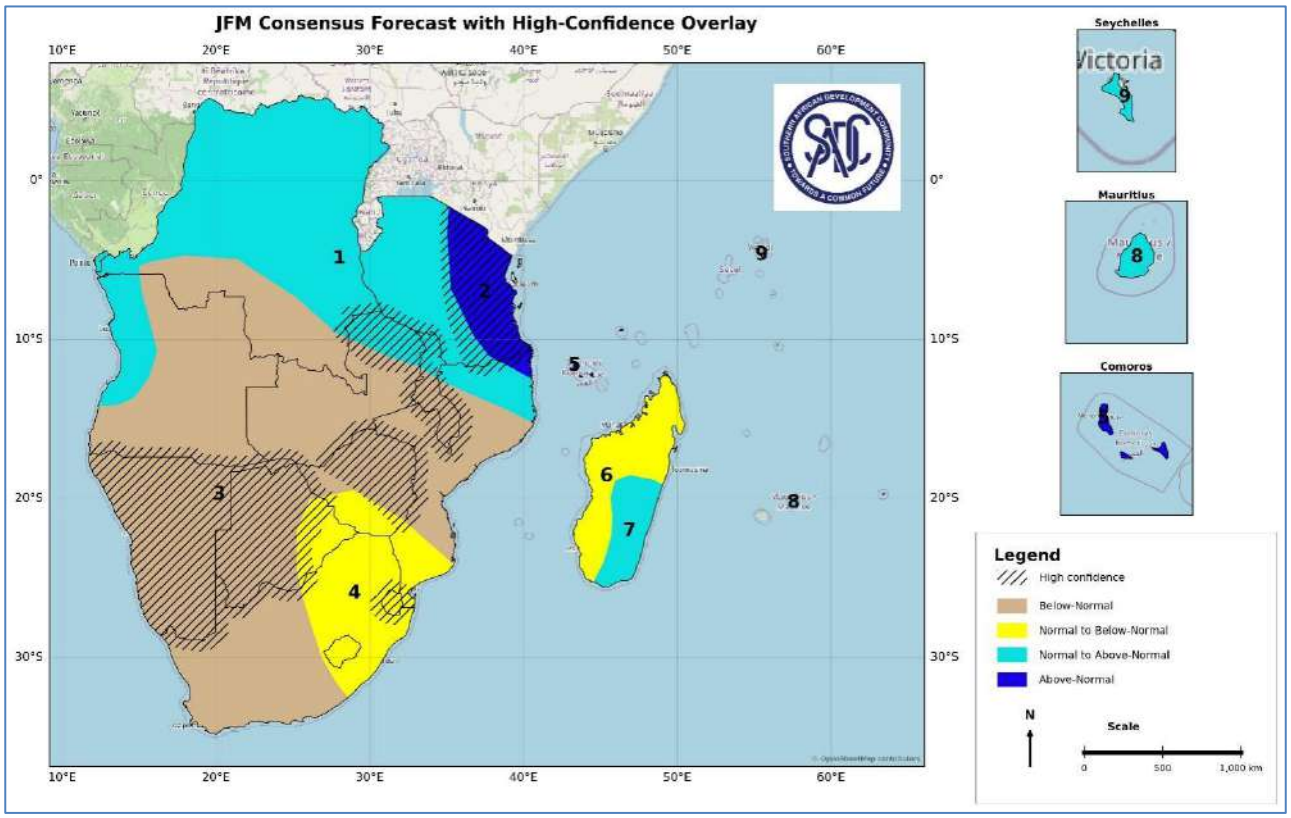


Figure 4: Rainfall forecast for January-February-March 2027

Zone 1: Most of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), extreme northwestern Angola, extreme northern Zambia, northern Malawi, northern parts Mozambique, western most parts of Tanzania.
Increased chances of normal to above normal rainfall

Zone 2: Eastern Tanzania, extreme northern tip of Mozambique.
Increased chances of above normal rainfall (High confidence).

Zone 3: Southern DRC, bulk of Angola, bulk of Zambia, central and southern Malawi, central Mozambique, Namibia and bulk of Botswana, the western half of South Africa, and bulk of Zimbabwe
Increased chances of below normal rainfall

Zone 4: Eastern half of South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, southern Zimbabwe, extreme southern Mozambique
increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall

Zone 5: Comoros.
Increased chances of above rainfall

Zone 6: North, and western Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall

Zone 7: Southeastern Madagascar.
Increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall

Zone 8: Mauritius.
Increased chances of normal above-normal rainfall

Zone 9: Seychelles.
Increased chances of normal above-normal rainfall

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 2026 to January 2027 indicates a high likelihood for above normal temperatures in most parts of the region, except over central to northeastern parts where cooler than usual temperatures are expected.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026-JANUARY 2027

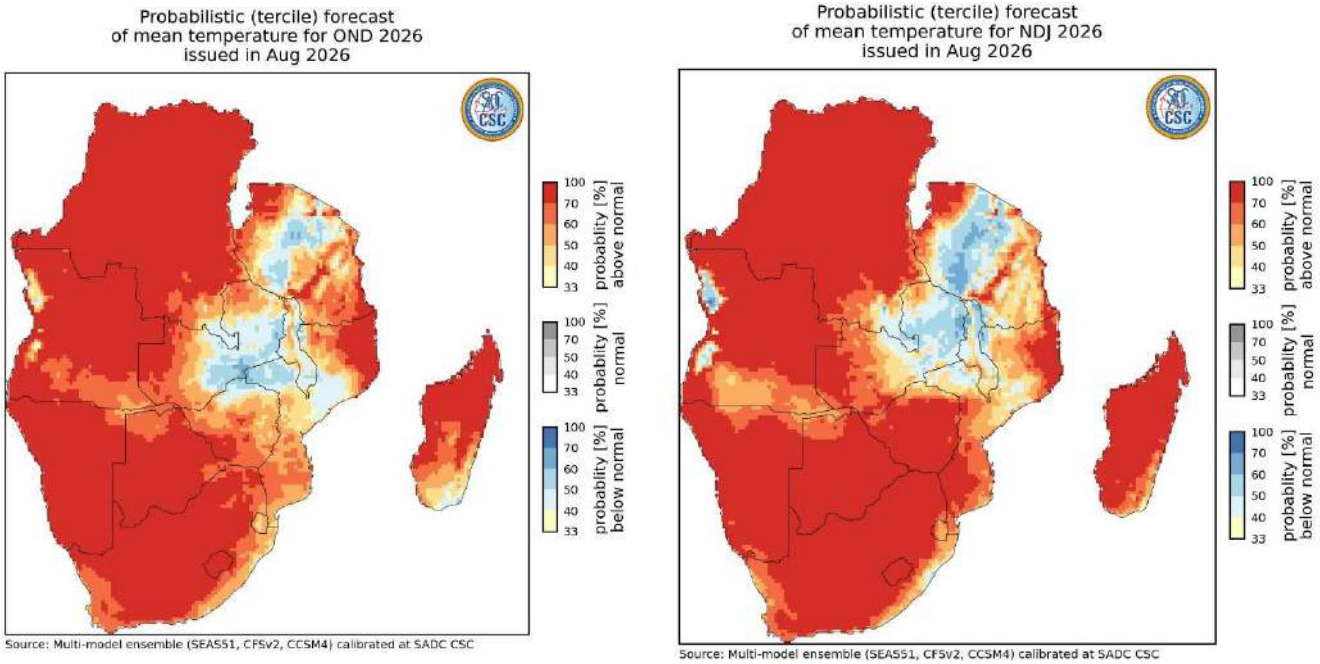


Figure 5: Temperature forecast for October-November-December 2026 (left) and November-December 2026-January 2027 (right)

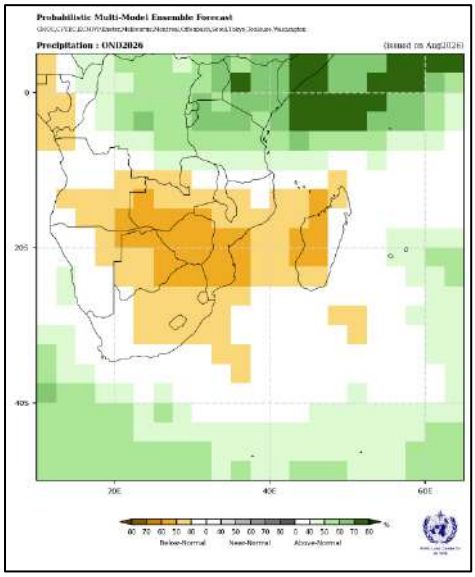
OVERVIEW OF DYNAMICAL MODELS FORECAST FROM GLOBAL PRODUCING CENTRES

The above outlook is broadly supported by forecasts from the multi-model ensemble (MME) of Global Producing Centres (GPCs) coordinated through the World Meteorological Organization's Lead Centre (WMO-LC). The latest global model guidance indicates that the developing El Niño is expected to strengthen further during the latter part of 2026, reaching strong to very strong intensity during the OND 2026 period and persisting into early 2027. Recent observations and model forecasts indicate a rapidly strengthening El Nino. The MME guidance indicates an increased likelihood of below-normal rainfall over substantial parts of the central and southern SADC region during the 2026/27 rainfall season, although the strength and spatial extent of the signal vary across models and forecast periods. Areas where the models show weak or mixed probabilities are associated with greater uncertainty and may experience rainfall closer to normal.

The anticipated rainfall pattern is broadly consistent with the established influence of strong El Niño events on Southern Africa climate, which generally increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall over large parts of the central and southern portions of the region. However, the regional rainfall

response is not determined by ENSO alone. The developing positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), together with the Subtropical Indian Ocean Dipole (SIOD), may enhance or moderate the El Nino signal at regional and local scales. WMO's latest global seasonal assessment also identifies the developing positive IOD alongside the strengthening El Nino.

The global MME guidance was therefore considered together with regional climate diagnostics, historical analogue seasons and expert assessment in developing the 2026/27 SADC seasonal rainfall outlook. The areas of strongest model agreement provide greater confidence in the forecast, while regions with divergent model solutions should be interpreted with caution.



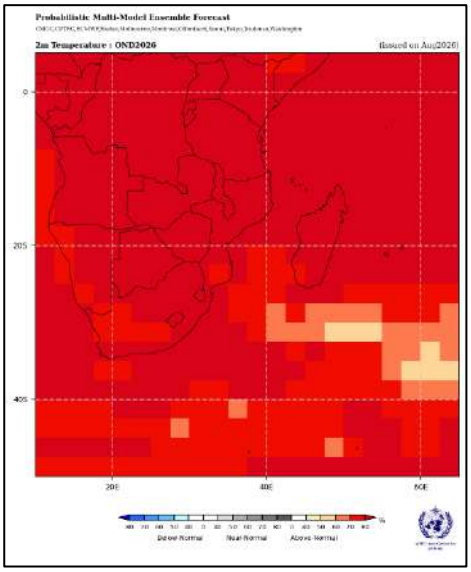


Figure 6: WMO Lead Centre Rainfall (left) and Figure 7: Temperature Outlook (right) over the SADC domain for the upcoming rainfall season for 2026/27

LONG-TERM MEAN SEASONAL RAINFALL (1991-2020)

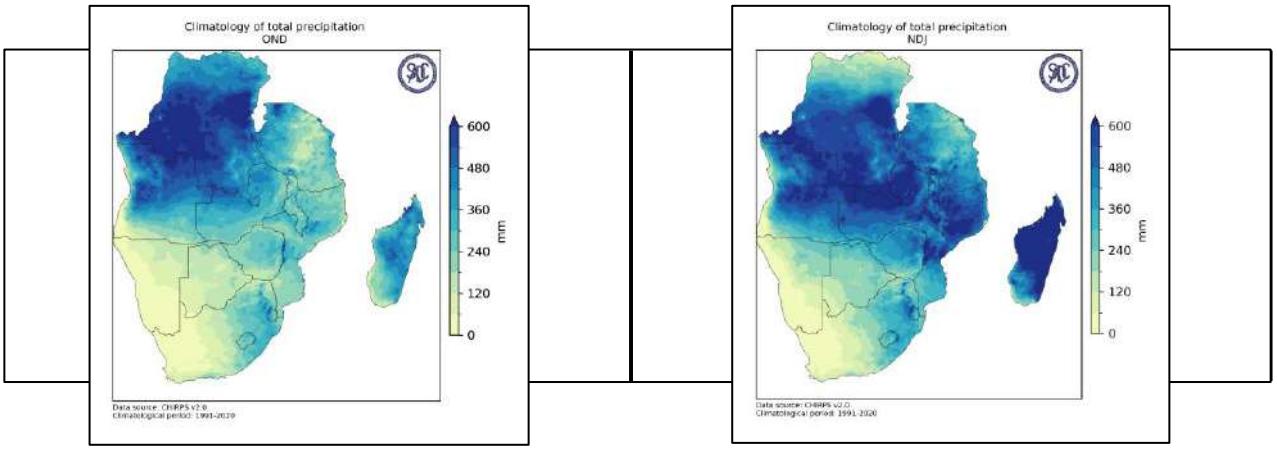


Figure 8: Long-term mean rainfall over SADC countries (top-left) October-November-December and (top-right) November-December-January (1991-2020).

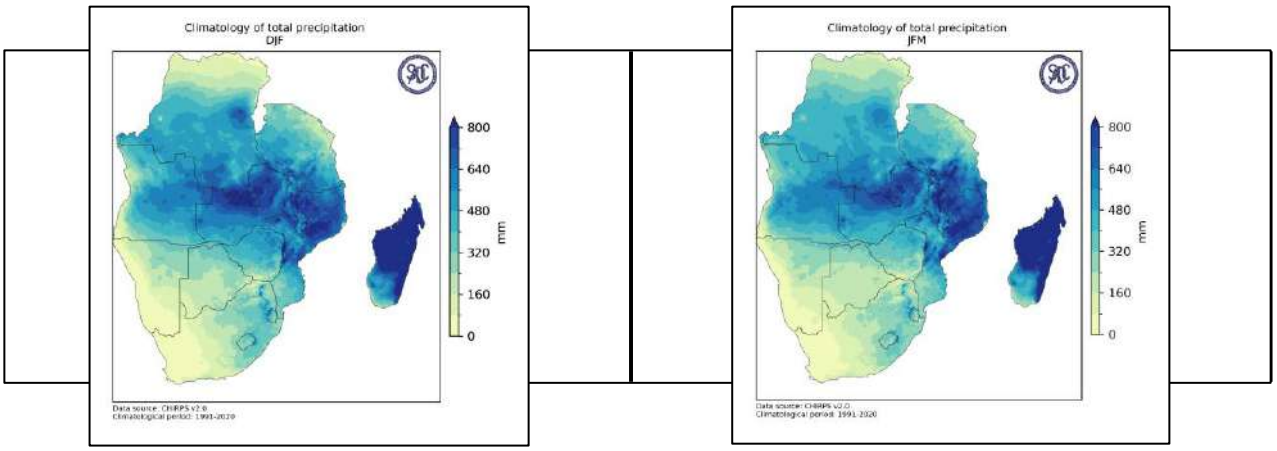


Figure 8: Long-term mean rainfall over SADC countries (bottom-left) December-January-February and (bottom-right) January-February-March (1991-2020).

Long-term mean rainfall during October–November–December (Figure 8(top-left)) generally increases from the southwestern parts of the contiguous SADC region towards the north and northeast. The lowest seasonal totals, generally below 100 mm, occur over western South Africa, southern and western Namibia, and southwestern Botswana. Higher totals are recorded over northern Angola, the southern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), northern Zambia and parts of Madagascar. Across Madagascar, rainfall generally increases from west to east.

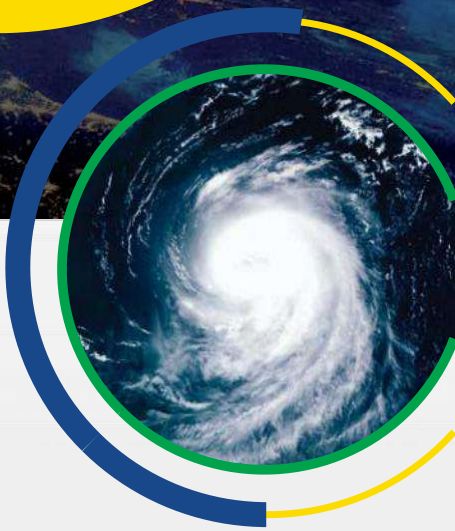
During November–December–January (Figure 8(top-right)), the main rainfall season becomes well established across much of the region. Seasonal totals exceeding 500 mm occur over large parts of Angola, Zambia and the southern DRC, as well as portions of Malawi, northern and central Mozambique, and Madagascar. Rainfall totals decrease progressively towards the southwest, with western South Africa and southern Namibia generally receiving less than 100 mm.

The December–January–February season (Figure 8(bottom-left)) represents the core of the regional rainfall season. Mean totals exceeding 600 mm are recorded over parts of Angola, Zambia, Malawi, the southern DRC, northern and central Mozambique, and Madagascar. Lower rainfall totals persist across the southwestern parts of the region, particularly western South Africa and southern Namibia, where the seasonal mean remains below 100 mm.

During January–February–March (Figure 8(bottom-right)), high rainfall totals persist over the northern and central parts of the SADC region. Mean totals above 600 mm occur over parts of Malawi, Zambia, Angola, the southern DRC, northern Mozambique and Madagascar. Rainfall continues to decrease towards the southwest, with the lowest totals occurring over western South Africa and southern Namibia.

SPONSORSHIP

The Thirty-Third Southern Africa Climate Outlook Forum was hosted at The Dome Conference Centre in Swakopmund, Namibia from 25 to 28 August 2026 with financial support from the Government of the Republic of Namibia, SADC Member States, and other partners including WFP, UK Met Wiser Project, FAO, UNDRR, GWP-SA.



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