REPUBLIC OF VANUATU/RÉPUBLIQUE DE VANUATU

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Vanuatu National Statement on the 2025/26 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Season, and El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Outlook

1. Key Messages:

1. Vanuatu can expect about **two (2)** to **four (4)** tropical cyclones to develop or pass through its Area of Responsibility (AoR) between November 2025 and April 2026, with at least **one (1)** reaching category 3 or a higher intensity.
2. The assessment of the Tropical Cyclone outlook for the coming season indicates *normal to slightly above normal* activity for Vanuatu when compared to the long-term average of two to three TCs per season.
3. Historically, the peak Tropical Cyclone season for Vanuatu is usually from January to March.
4. Despite the official season running from November through April, TCs sometimes occur out-of-season. E.g., TC *Liua* in September 2018, TC *Donna* in May 2017, TC *Lola* in October 2023.
5. Significant rainfall, extreme winds, hazardous marine conditions, coastal inundation, floods, and landslides are all possible impacts TC events.
6. Oceanic and atmospheric forecasts for the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) suggest weak-to-moderate La Niña conditions have an 85% chance of developing by October-December 2025 (ESNZ, 2025).
7. VMGD will continue to monitor the evolution of the ENSO and update the cyclone guidance accordingly. All communities shall remain vigilant and well prepared.

2. Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook:

The 2025/26 Vanuatu Tropical Cyclone Outlook was developed using a combination of analogue analysis and dynamical climate model guidance consistent with the Earth Sciences New Zealand (formerly NIWA). The analogue approach identified eight past seasons (1984/85, 1995/96, 2000/01, 2008/09, 2011/12, 2017/18, 2020/21, and 2021/22) that shared similar climatic conditions observed between May and October 2025, characterized by neutral conditions transitioning to a weak-to-moderate La Niña. The analysis confirmed a ***normal to slightly above-normal*** level of activity. Considering the long-term average of two to three cyclones per season for Vanuatu, the national outlook reasonably projects a range of **2-4** for the 2025/26 season.

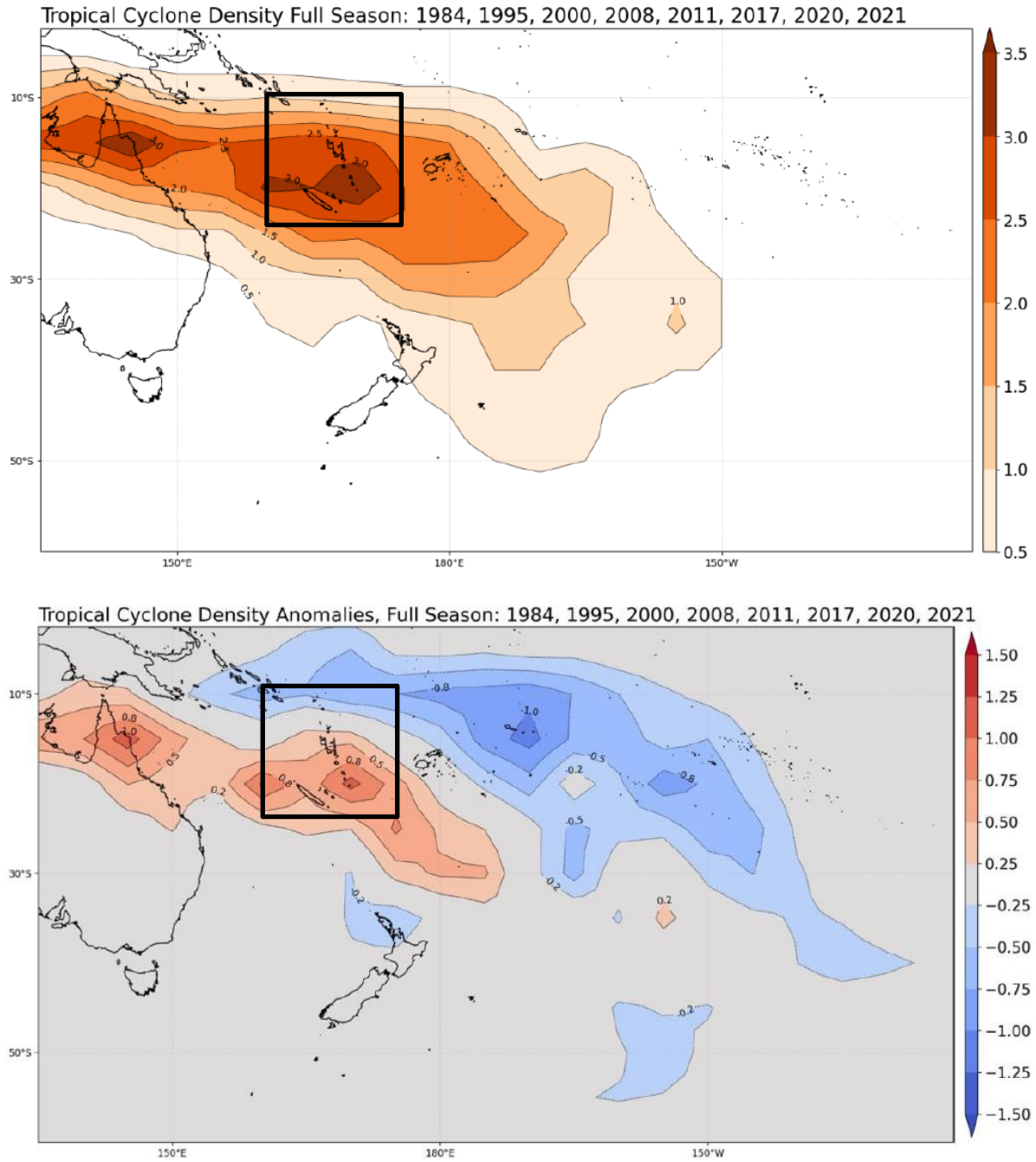

Figure 1: Number of TCs occurring for the main development season (November – April) focusing on Vanuatu's Area of Responsibility (160°-175°E, 10°-23°S): (top panel) average number over selected 8 analogue seasons; (bottom panel) departure from normal for the analogue seasons. For each year noted, that represents the start of the main development season (i.e. 1983 = November 1983-April 1984)

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3. El Niño-Southern Oscillation outlook

The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a key driver of tropical cyclone behaviour across the region. As of early October 2025, sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific are cooler than average and approaching La Niña thresholds, with an 85% chance of a weak-to-moderate event developing between October and December 2025. La Niña conditions, should they develop, are likely to persist through early 2026, with deterioration of the event during the back half of the TC season in February-April 2026 (ESNZ, 2025).

For Vanuatu, even a weak La Niña typically brings a westward shift of cyclone activity, increased rainfall, stronger southeast trade winds, and a higher likelihood of cyclones forming or tracking near the country (CSIRO, 2023).

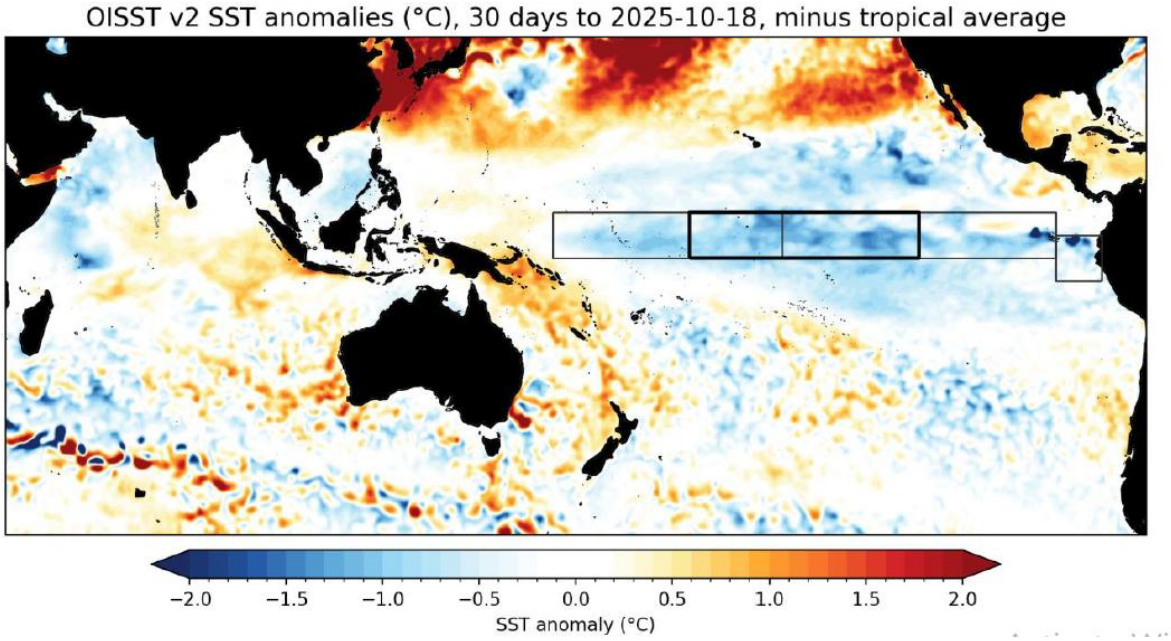

Figure 2: Sea Surface Temperature (SST) anomalies (°C) for the 30 days ending 18 October 2025, relative to the tropical average. *Blue shading indicates cooler than average SSTs (-0.5 °C to -1.5 °C) across the central and eastern Pacific, consistent with the early stages of a La Niña event. In contrast, warmer than average SSTs (0.5 °C to 2.0 °C) are observed over the western Pacific, including near Vanuatu, indicating enhanced oceanic warmth that supports increased convection and slightly elevated cyclone potential in the region.*

4. Potential Impacts:

Tropical cyclones affecting any part of Vanuatu may bring intense rainfall, destructive winds, hazardous seas, and coastal damage. Under expected neutral to weak La Niña-like conditions**,** the country faces a near-average cyclone risk**,** yet there remains a significant chance of flooding, landslides, and wind damage affecting key sectors and livelihoods.

Past events have shown that even a single cyclone can cause widespread social and economic disruption. Therefore, communities are urged to stay alert, weather-ready, and to follow all official warnings issued by VMGD.

Monthly updates will be shared through the Climate Bulletins, VMGD briefings, and at Community Climate Centres and notice boards.

Note: In addition to scientific forecasts, VMGD acknowledges the value of Traditional Knowledge (TK) in weather and climate, which continues to support community-level awareness and preparedness. Traditional Indicators for cyclones include ground nesting of hornets, Pacific Emerald Dove, and over abundance of fruit trees example mango, to indicate the approaching cyclone season (SPREP, 2023). As highlighted by Malsale et al. (2018)**,** traditional weather and climate knowledge remains vital for environmental decision-making across Pacific Island communities. While TK provides important early clues about changing weather, it should always be used together with official forecasts and warnings issued by VMGD to ensure community safety and accuracy.

About this Outlook

The 2025/26 Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook for Vanuatu was developed by the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department (VMGD) through the Climate Services Division, using a combination of analogue analysis and regional climate model guidance consistent with methodologies adopted by the Earth Sciences New Zealand (formerly NIWA) and other Pacific partners under the SPREP-led regional collaboration.

For more Information:

Contact the Climate Services Division (CSD) on +678 24686 and climate@meteo.gov.vu.

References:

1. Earth Sciences New Zealand. (2025, October 8). *2025–26 Southwest Pacific Tropical Cyclone Outlook*. Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ). https://niwa.co.nz/climate/southwest-pacific-tropical-cyclone-outlook

2. CSIRO, Federation University, & Climate Comms. (2023). *Tropical cyclone observations, trends and projections for Vanuatu.* A report to the Van-KIRAP project. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Technical Report, Melbourne, Australia. https://www.vanclimatefutures.gov.vu/assets/docs/Tropical%20Cyclone.pdf

3. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme [SPREP], Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department [VMGD], Bureau of Meteorology [BoM], & Vanuatu Cultural Centre [VKS]. (2023). *Vanuatu National Traditional Knowledge Indicators Booklet.* Van-KIRAP Project, funded by the Green Climate Fund. Apia, Samoa: SPREP.

4. Malsale, P., Sanau, N., Tofaeono, T. I., Kavisi, Z., Willy, A., Mitiepo, R., Lui, S., Chambers, L. E., & Plotz, R. D. (2018). Protocols and partnerships for engaging Pacific Island communities in the collection and use of traditional climate knowledge. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 99(12), 2517–2532.