



**GMES
AND AFRICA**



MONTHLY OCEANOGRAPHY BULLETIN

South West Indian Ocean
October 2021



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| LIST OF ACRONYMS | 2 |
| 1.0 INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 2.0 HIGHLIGHTS | 3 |
| 3.0 SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE | 3 |
| 3.1 DESCRIPTION OF SEA SURFACE TEMPERATURE | 8 |
| 4.0 CHLOROPHYLL-A CONCENTRATION | 9 |
| 4.1 DESCRIPTION OF CHLOROPHYLL-A | 13 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 14 |
| ANNEX | 15 |



List of Acronyms

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| Chl- <i>a</i> | Chlorophyll- <i>a</i> |
| EU | European Union |
| GMES | Global Monitoring for Environment and Security |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre |
| MODIS | Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectrometer |
| MOI | Mauritius Oceanography Institute |
| SMI | Standard Mapped Image |
| SST | Sea Surface Temperature |
| SWIO | South West Indian Ocean |



1.0 Introduction

This monthly bulletin is produced by the MOI under the GMES & Africa project and provides satellite based oceanographic observations of the South West Indian Ocean region. This issue focuses on remote sensing sea surface temperature and chlorophyll-*a* concentration. It is targeted at users from the marine and fisheries realm for monitoring purposes. It is also a source of information for researchers and the scientific community.

2.0 Highlights

Sea Surface Temperature

- For the month of October 2021, SST was relatively low below latitude 10°S, except for the region north east of Madagascar.
- The average SST in the Mascarene region varied between 23 to 25 °C.
- The average SST for October 2021 was relatively similar to the climatological mean in the South West Indian Ocean region.
- The SST was slightly below the climatological mean for the region around Mauritius Island.
- For the region off the coast of Somalia a negative anomaly was observed for October 2021.

Chlorophyll-a Concentration

- For October 2021, there was no major deviation between the observed Chl-a concentration and the climatological mean except for some localised regions.
- Chl-a concentration was typically lower in the Mascarene region as compared to the northern and continental regions of the Indian Ocean.
- The monthly time series analysis for the region around Mauritius Island shows that a slightly higher Chl-a concentration was observed for the region as compared to September 2021.
- For the region off the coast of Somalia, Chl-a concentration was still above the climatological mean in October 2021.

3.0 Sea Surface Temperature



Sea surface temperature monthly mean (°C) for October 2021

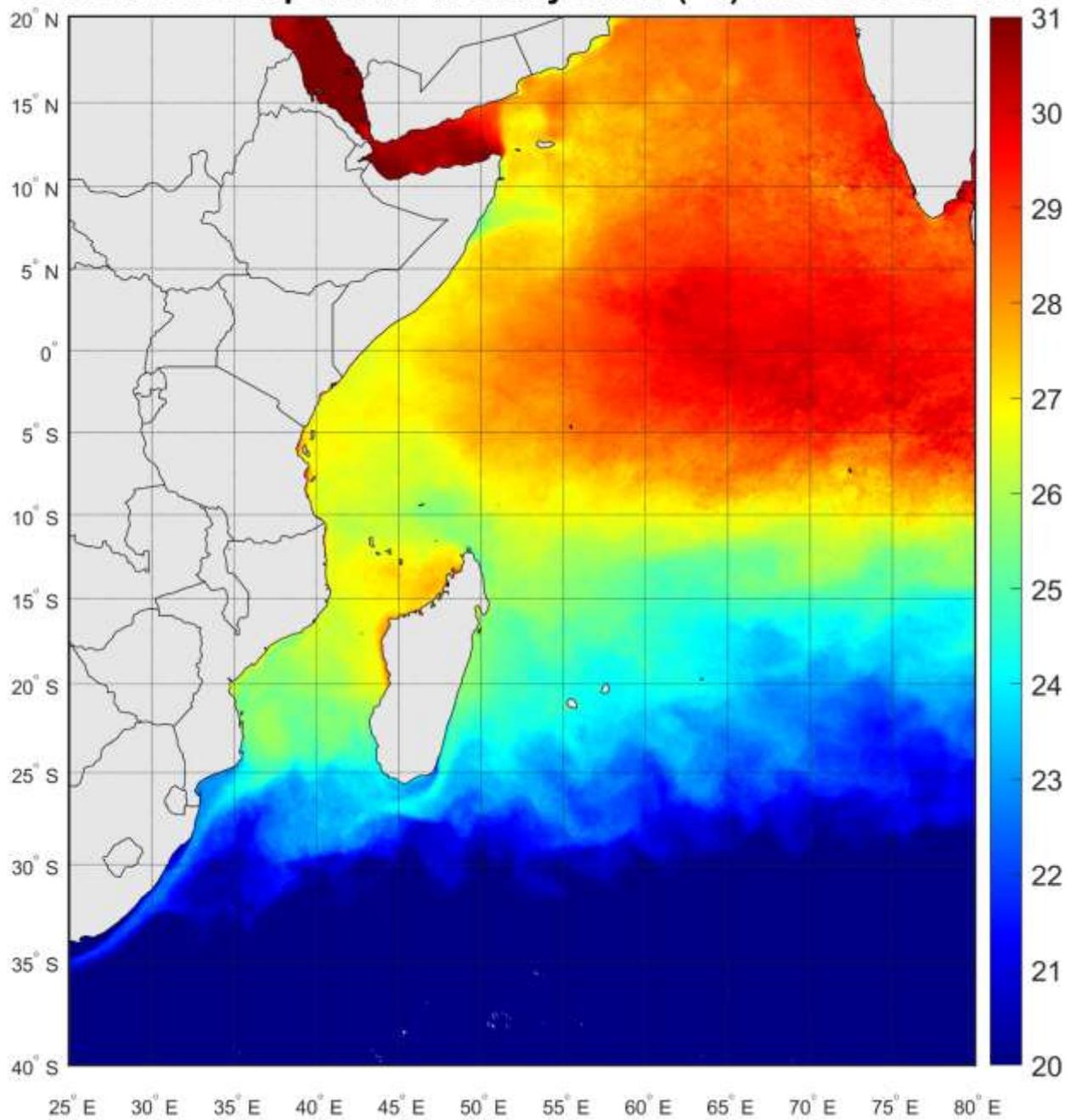


Figure 1: Mean sea surface temperature for the month of October 2021 (°C)

Sea surface temperature climatology ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) for October from 2002 to 2019

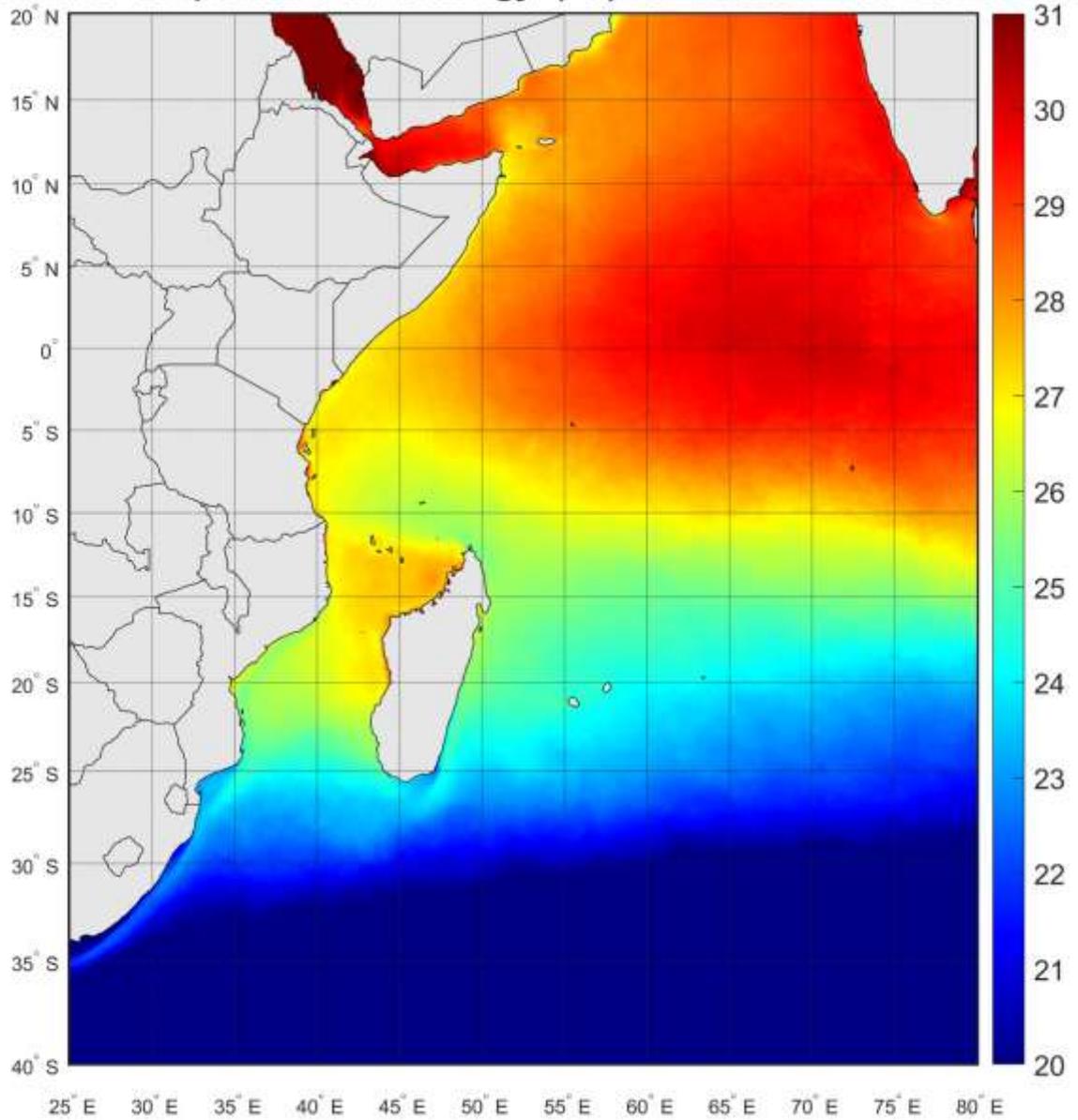


Figure 2: Sea Surface Temperature Climatology ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) for the month of October (2002 - 2019)

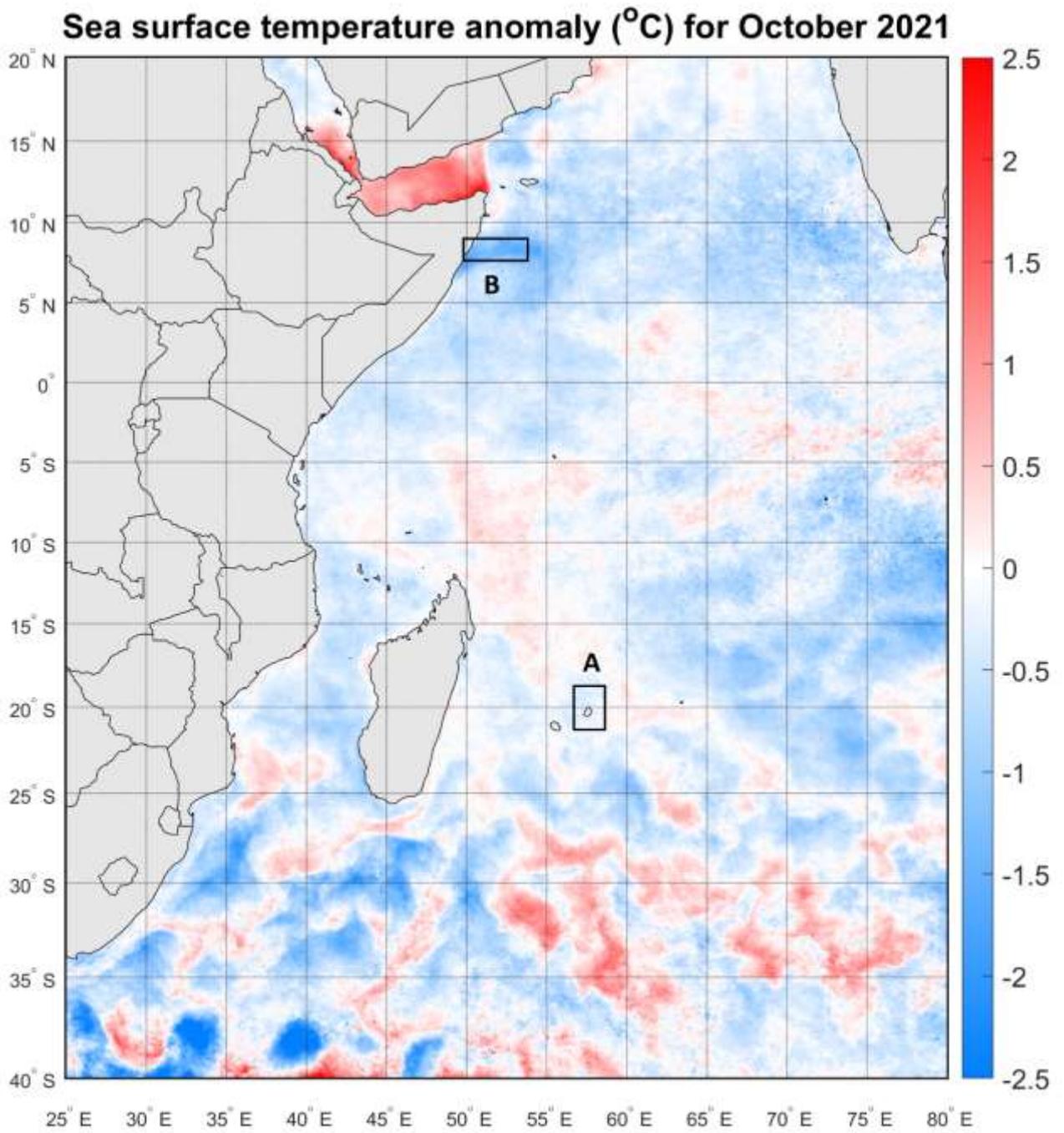


Figure 3: Anomaly of Sea Surface Temperature for October 2021 ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)

Time series generated from the monthly average for October 2021 and the climatological mean for October 2021 in the region highlighted in Figure 3, namely Region A around Mauritius Island; and Region B, off the coast of Somalia.

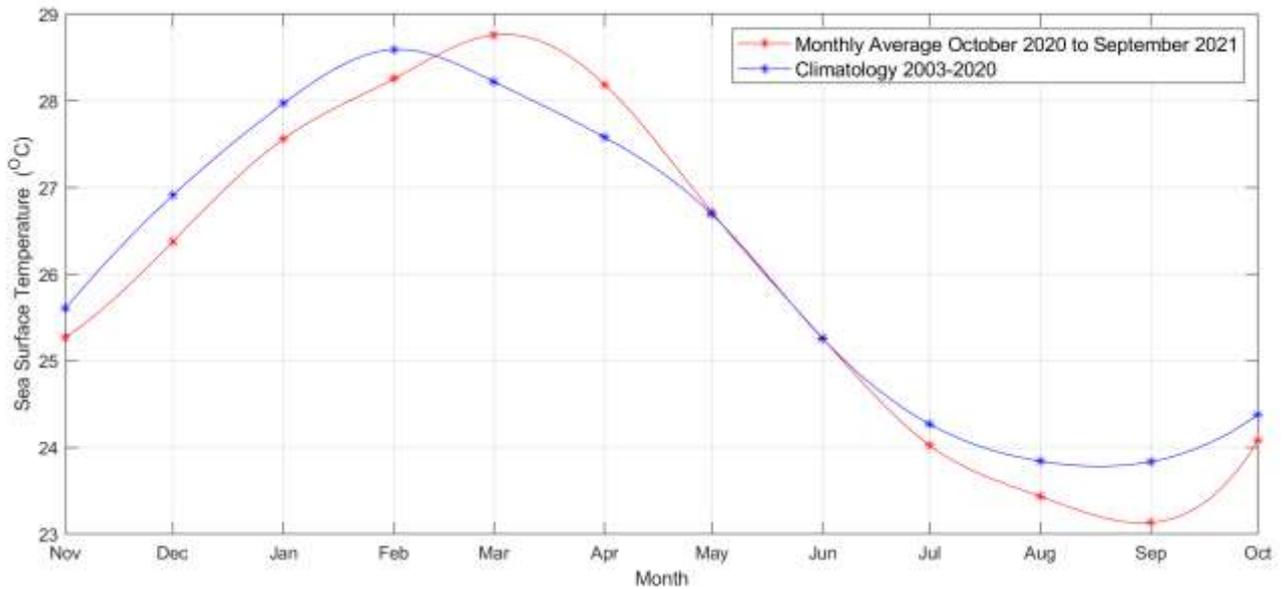


Figure 4: Temporal variation of sea surface temperature (°C) around Mauritius Island (Region A)

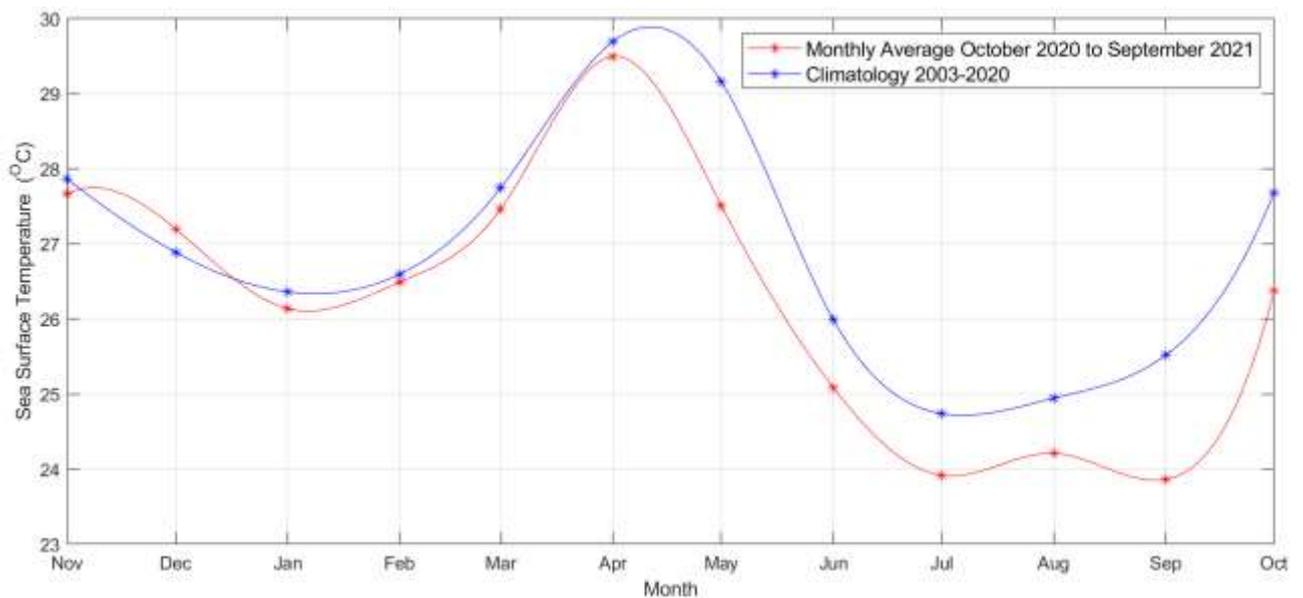


Figure 5: Temporal variation of sea surface temperature (°C) off the coast of Somalia (Region B)

3.1 Description of Sea Surface Temperature

Sea surface temperature (SST) is the temperature of the top millimetre of the ocean's surface. Figure 1 displays the SST variation for the month of October 2021. Warmer temperatures are represented in red and yellow, while relatively cooler temperatures are shown in green and blue. SST anomaly is a departure from average conditions.

For the month of October 2021, SST was relatively low below latitude 10°S, except for the region north east of Madagascar. The average SST in the Mascarene region varied between 23 to 25 °C. Figure 2 represents the climatology for the month of October based on the average SST calculated from 2002 to 2019. As it was the case in the previous month, the average SST for October 2021 was relatively similar to the climatological mean in the South West Indian Ocean region, as depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 3 shows a temperature anomaly chart for the month of October 2021. The blue colour on the map represents temperatures that were cooler than the average, the white colour shows near-average temperatures, while the red colour shows temperatures that were warmer than the average. Since July 2021, the sea surface temperature was slightly below the climatological mean for the region around Mauritius Island, as confirmed by the time series analysis (Figure 4, depicted by 'Region A' in Figure 3).

Figure 5 shows the temporal variation of SST observed off the coast of Somalia (Region B in Figure 3). The graph shows a negative anomaly around that specific region for October 2021. This phenomenon has been observed since the beginning of the year for that particular region.

4.0 Chlorophyll-a Concentration

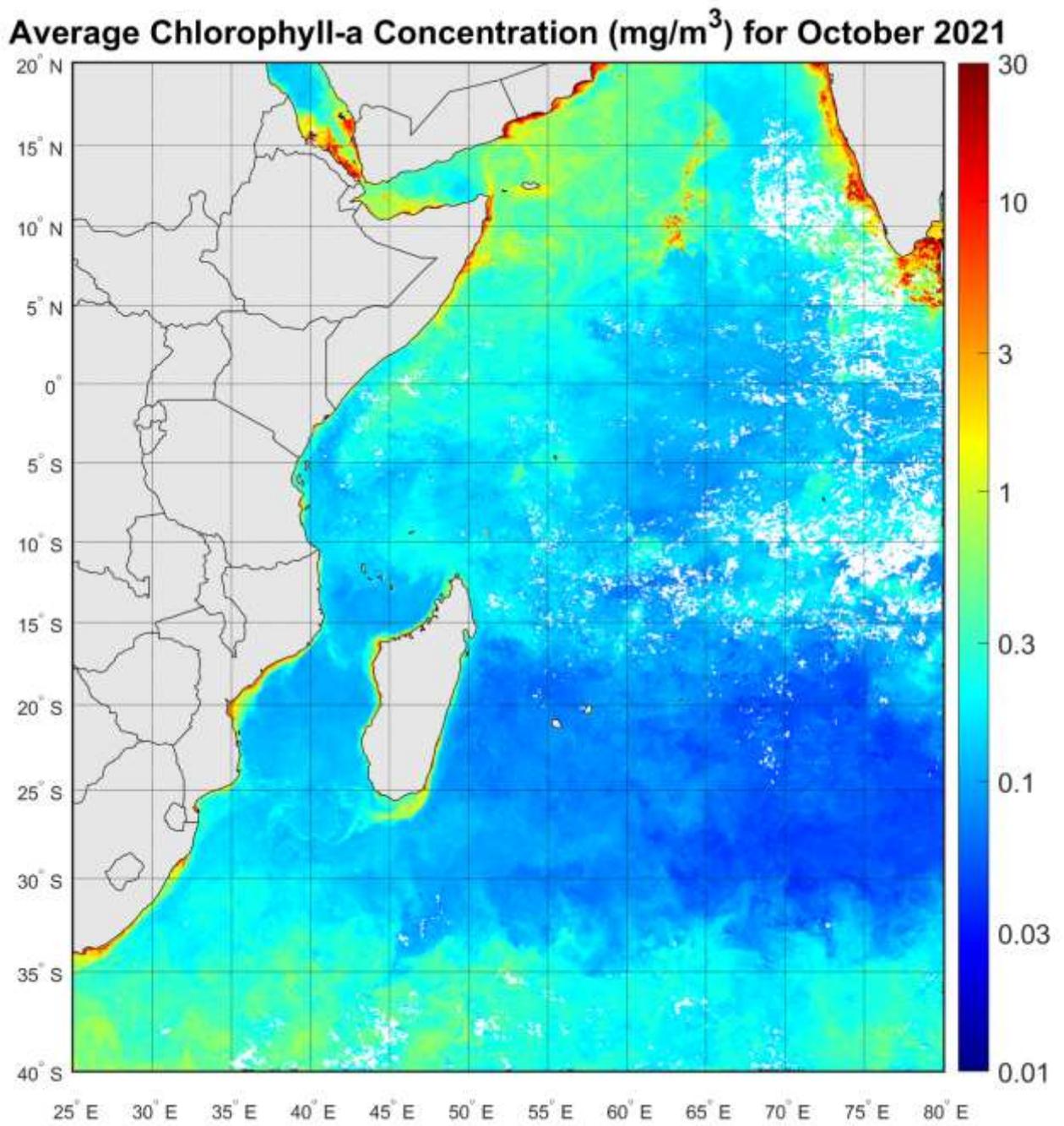


Figure 6: Mean chlorophyll-*a* concentration for the month of October 2021 (mg/m^3)

Climatology of Chl-a Conc. (mg/m³) for October from 2002 to 2019

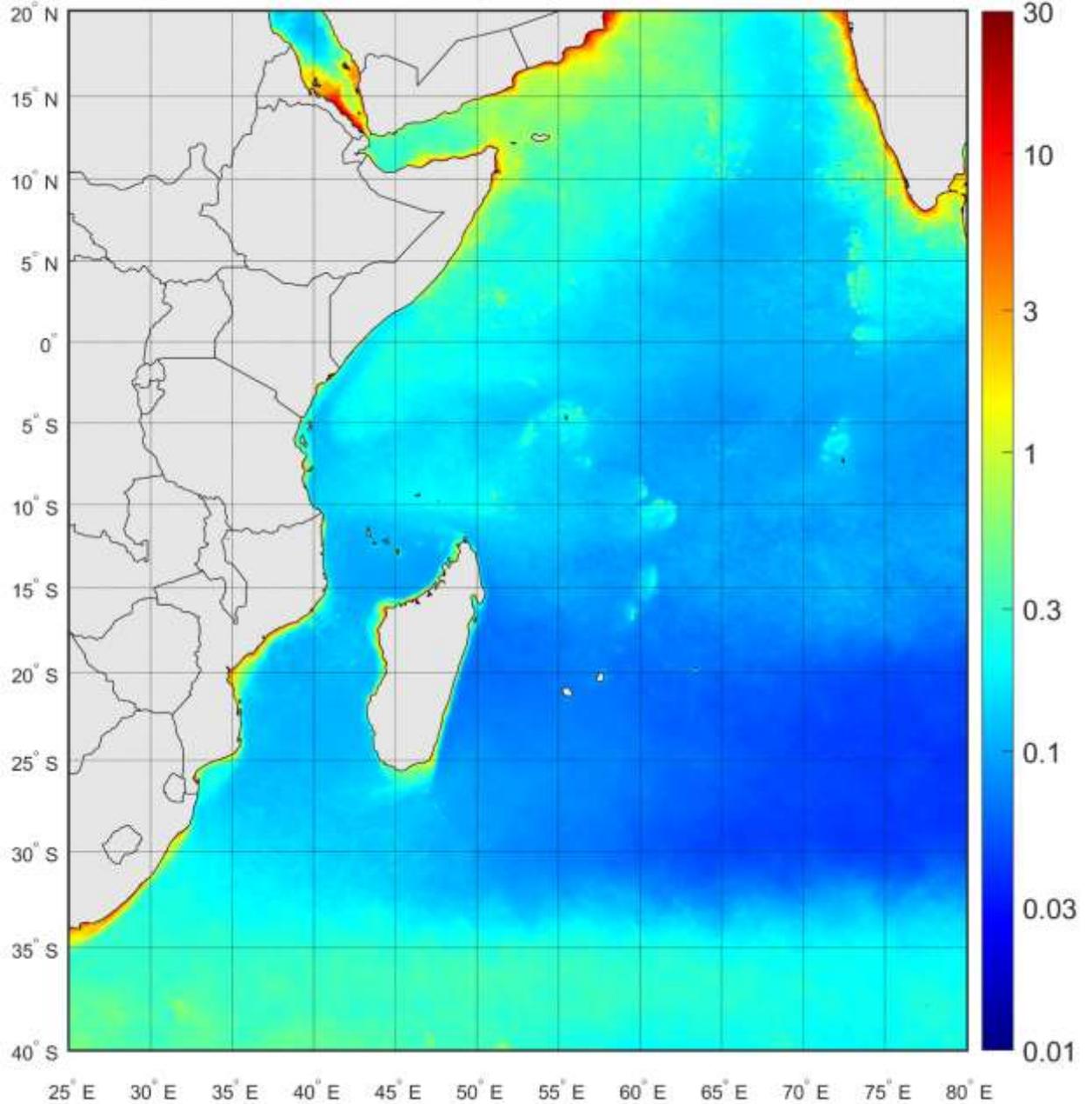


Figure 7: Chlorophyll-*a* Climatology (mg/m³) for the month of October (2002 -2019)

Chlorophyll-a Concentration Anomaly (mg/m^3) for October 2021

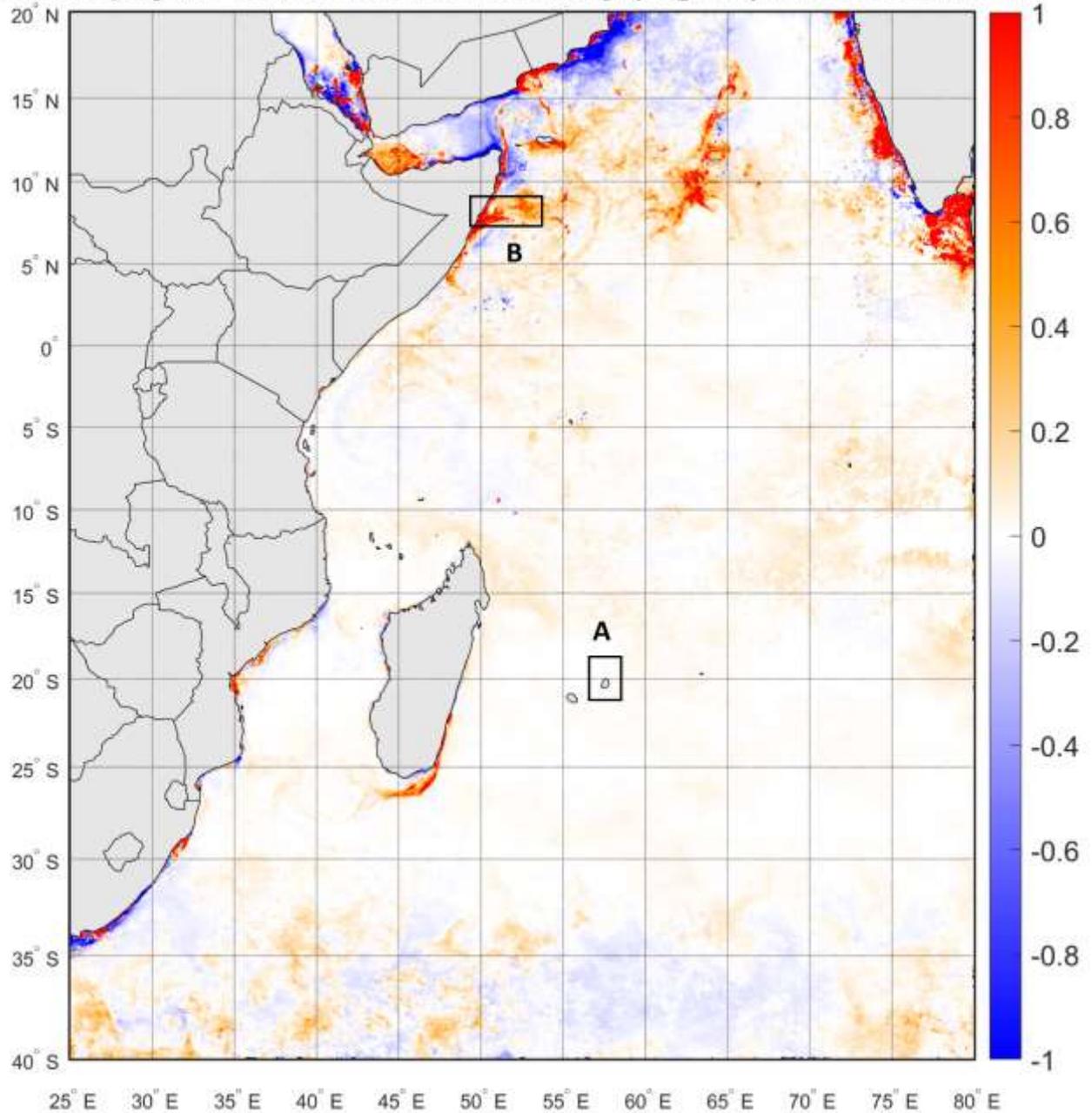


Figure 8: Anomaly of chlorophyll-*a* for October 2021 (mg/m^3)

Chlorophyll-*a* time series generated from the monthly average for October 2021 and the climatological normal for October 2021 in the regions encircle in Figure 8, namely region A around Mauritius and region B, off the coast of Somalia.

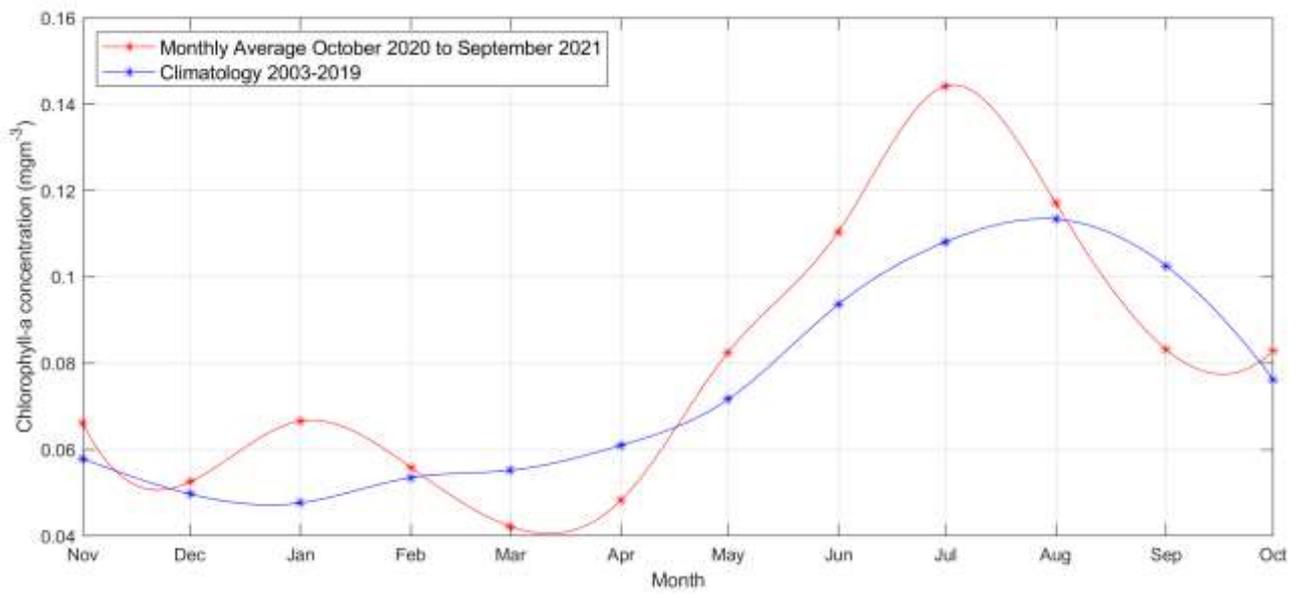


Figure 9: Temporal variation of chlorophyll-*a* (mg/m^3) around Mauritius Island (Region A)

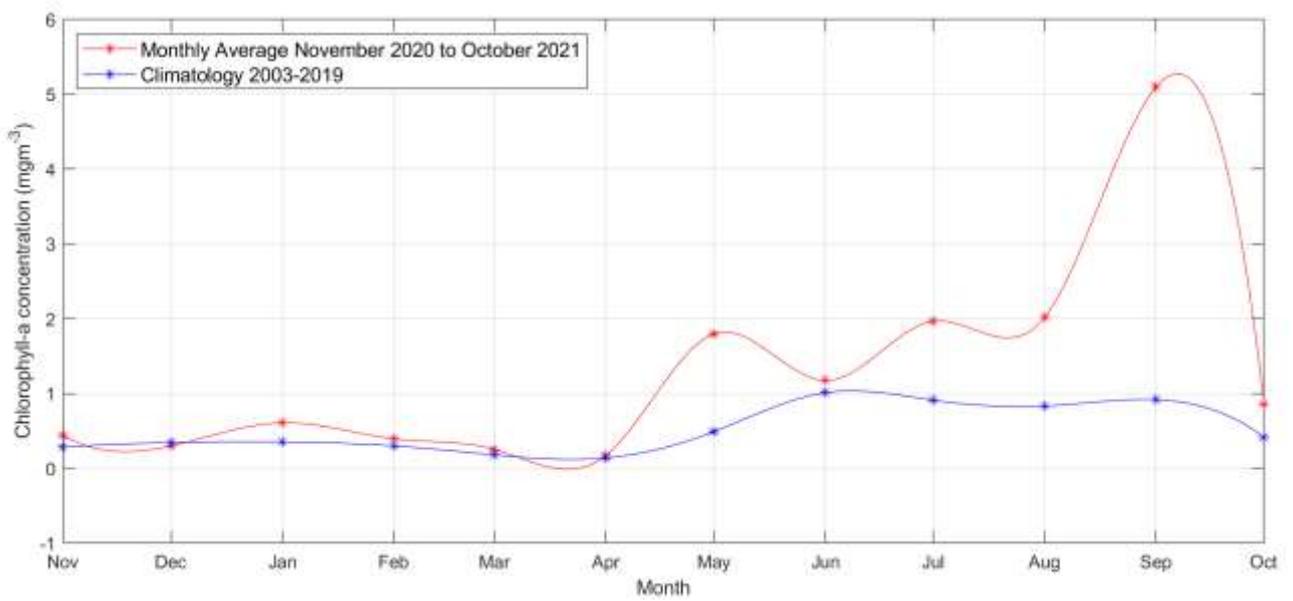


Figure 10: Temporal variation of chlorophyll-*a* (mg/m^3) for the region off the coast of Somalia (Region B)

4.1 Description of Chlorophyll-a

Figure 6 shows the Chlorophyll-a concentration in milligrams of Chl-a per cubic metre of seawater (mg/m^3) for the month of October 2021. The regions where the Chl-a concentration was very low, indicating a low abundance of phytoplankton, are in blue and those where the Chl-a concentration was high are shown in red. Land is light grey, and places where there is no data (e.g. cloud cover) is represented in white.

A high Chl-a concentration usually indicates a high primary productivity, an essential condition for fish aggregation and fish catch, while a positive Chl-a anomaly shows a higher concentration of Chl-a than the average observed for the same period.

As it was the case the previous months, for October 2021 there was no significant deviation between the observed chlorophyll-a concentration (Figure 6) and the climatological mean (Figure 7) except for some localised regions. Chl-a concentration was typically lower in the Mascarene region as compared to the northern and continental regions of the Indian Ocean as confirmed by the anomaly map for October 2021 (Figure 8).

Figure 9 shows the monthly time series for the region around Mauritius Island (region A in Figure 8). The graph shows that a slightly higher Chl-a concentration was observed for the region as compared to September 2021.

Figure 10 shows the temporal variation of Chl-a for region B in Figure 8, that is, for the region off the coast of Somalia. It can be observed that the positive anomaly observed in that region is maintained although to a lesser extent than the previous month.

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Disclaimer

The Mauritius Oceanography Institute assumes no legal liability or responsibility for how this information is used. This bulletin has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union (EU) through the African Union Commission (AUC). The contents of this bulletin can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU and the AUC.



Description of Environmental Indicators

Sea Surface Temperature (SST) reflects the storage of thermal energy in the upper mixed layer of the oceans. Sea surface temperature anomalies have practical applications to fisheries and coastal waters management, including coral reef monitoring and prediction of red tides or other harmful algal blooms.

SST Anomaly means a departure from a reference value or long-term average. A positive anomaly indicates that the observed temperature was warmer than the reference value, while a negative anomaly indicates that the observed temperature was cooler than the reference value.

Chlorophyll-a (Chl-a) is the light-harvesting pigment found in marine microscopic photosynthetic plants, known as phytoplankton. Its concentration is widely used as an index of phytoplankton biomass and is also used as a proxy for primary production. *Chl-a* absorbs most visible light but reflects some green and near-infrared light. By measuring what kind of light is absorbed and reflected, satellites can measure chlorophyll-*a* concentrations in the ocean, thus providing valuable insights on the health of the ocean.

Chl-a Anomaly is a variation from the mean chlorophyll-*a* concentration.

Datasets

Level 3 SST and *Chl-a* Standard Mapped Image (SMI) dataset was used from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MODIS) data, with a spatial resolution of 4 km. The Level 3 SMI products are image representations of binned data products obtained from OceanColor (<https://oceandata.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov/>).

Indicator Calculation

Monthly SST anomaly images were created using the processed monthly satellite data and the monthly climatology data. The monthly anomalies were calculated relative to the respective monthly mean. The SST climatology was obtained from MODIS data (2003-2019). The nominal pixel resolution is 4 km. The SST anomalies were calculated from the difference of the monthly composite with its respective monthly climatology based on the interval from 2003 to 2019.

Similarly, the *Chl-a* anomalies were calculated from the monthly average and the monthly climatology based on the interval from 2003 to 2019.