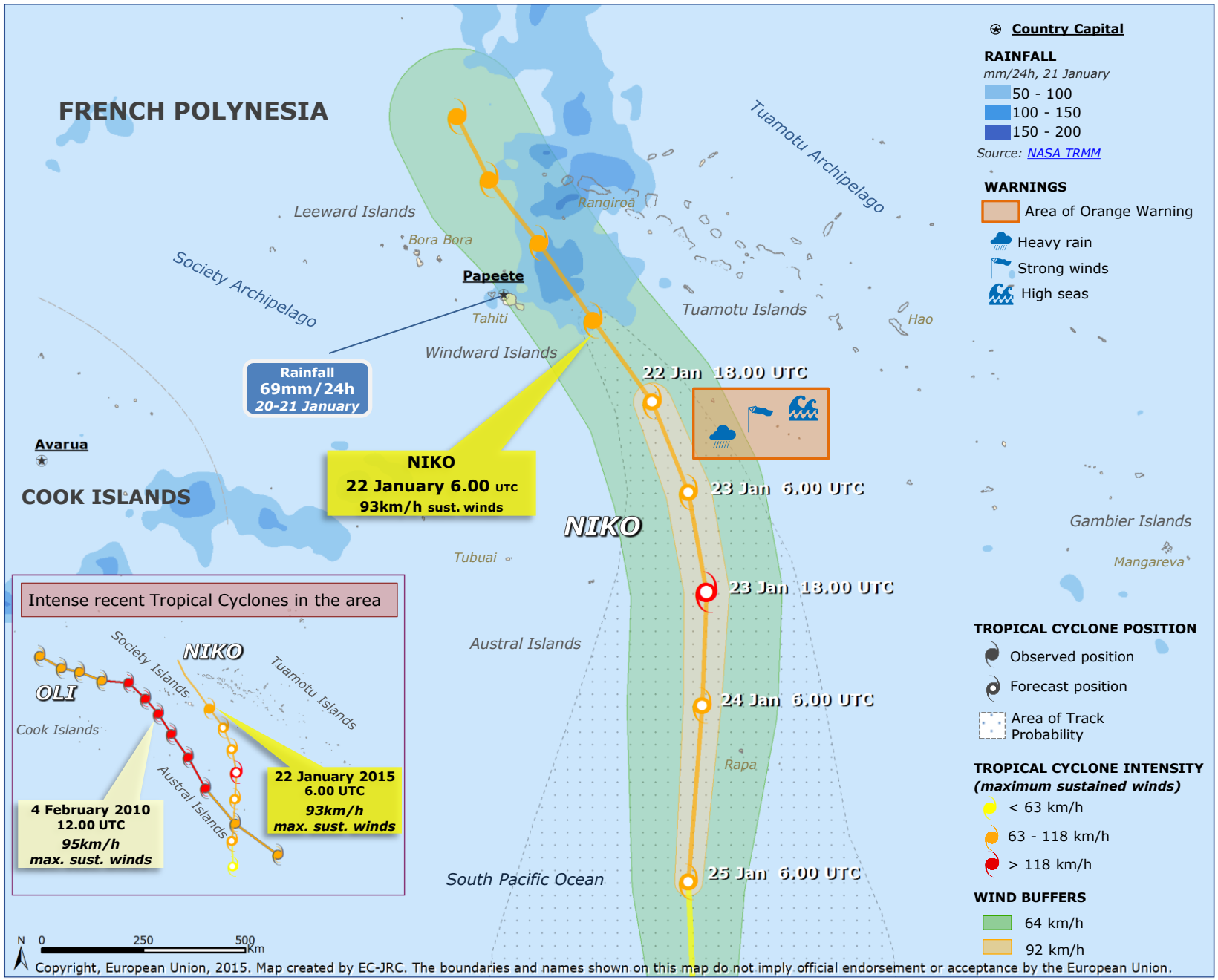
22 January 2015: French Polynesia - Tropical Cyclone NIKO



SITUATION

- **NIKO** formed in the South Pacific Ocean, north of the Leeward islands in French Polynesia, on 20 January, and started moving south-east, intensifying.
- On 21 January, at 6.00 UTC, NIKO's centre had passed between the Tuamotu and the Windward groups of islands and it was located approximately 165 km south-east of Tahiti. Its maximum sustained wind speed was 93 km/h.
- Over the following 48 hours, the Tropical Cyclone is forecast to continue on its south-eastern track, approaching the west Tuamotu islands later on 22 January. It will then proceed with a turn towards the south. Its intensity is expected to increase until approximately the afternoon/evening of 23 January and then it is forecast to start weakening.
- Heavy rainfall, strong winds and high seas are forecast to affect the islands along NIKO's path and France Meteo-French Polynesia has issued an Orange Warning for the western Tuamotu Islands.

Sources: *GDACS, JTWC, France Meteo-French Polynesia, WMO, Local Media (1, 2)*

- Tropical Cyclones in the South Pacific Ocean occur normally between November and April.
- The most intense Tropical Cyclone in the area in the past few years is **OLI**, which formed north of the Cook Islands in February 2010. OLI is one of the most devastating cyclones to have hit French Polynesia, having forced the evacuation of thousands of people and destroying over 280 houses in Society and Austral islands.
- Between 1980 and 2012, eight Tropical Cyclones have triggered a national natural disaster declaration in French Polynesia, causing the death of 33 people in total and created major housing, infrastructure and crop damage.

Sources: *SPC, EM-DAT*