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TSR Launches New Tropical Storm Tracker Innovations

Tropical Storm Risk (TSR), the consortium of experts on insurance, risk management and seasonal climate forecasting led by UCL's Benfield Hazard Research Centre, today announced the launch of two innovative graphical products designed to enhance its award-winning* Tropical Storm Tracker.

These innovations complement the existing suite of tracking software and may be accessed free of charge on TSR's website www.tropicalstormrisk.com. They comprise:

1. A **'wind speed probability'** graphical product which maps the likelihood that any specific point on a map will be struck by hurricane (74 mph) and/or by tropical storm strength (39mph) 1-min sustained windspeeds over the next 5 days.
2. A **'prior wind affected areas'** graphical product which maps the regions already affected by a tropical cyclone's high wind speeds.

These products are available for tropical storms worldwide. They are designed for clarity and utility and will allow insurers, reinsurers and risk managers to assess better the risk specific to a given location caused by active tropical cyclones as well as providing better real-time information on the likelihood of potential loss to portfolios.

The new applications will also benefit humanitarian relief agencies by providing more useful advance warning on the regions most likely to be affected by a storm – and on those regions already affected – so that aid may be prioritised better. In addition, business, government and society may also benefit by better understanding the risk associated with these damaging and deadly weather systems.

Forecast probabilities are updated every 6 hours, except for systems in the North Indian and Southern Hemisphere basins where updates occur every 12 hours.

Commenting on the launch of the new tools, Professor Mark Saunders, the TSR Lead Scientist and Head of Seasonal Forecasting & Meteorological Hazards at the Benfield Hazard Research Centre said: "TSR's innovative 'wind speed probability' graphical product adds a new dimension to tropical storm tracking and risk-assessment. Previously, decision makers could only guess at the chance that a given location would be struck by damaging winds from an active tropical cyclone. This new quantitative tool allows users to see this likelihood at a glance out to 5 days lead. The product will reduce the risk and uncertainty associated with active tropical storms worldwide."

John Moore, Head of the ReMetrics Natural Hazards team at Benfield added:

"TSR's new 'wind speed probability' product provides a user-friendly information platform on active tropical storms which will help re/insurers and their customers assess the likelihood that losses will happen. This information is both informing of risk and potentially useful in helping to determine risk management strategies. It is also the first time that this important probabilistic information has been available worldwide to the industry."

*In 2004 Tropical Storm Risk won the prestigious British Insurance Award for London Market Innovation of the Year for its global Tropical Storm Tracker. Other recent innovations include a breakthrough in the seasonal prediction of hurricane activity reaching the coast of the U.S. and the first demonstration of the business relevance of seasonal U.S. hurricane forecasts. TSR also currently provides tropical storm alert feeds to Reuters AlertNet (www.alertnet.org), the humanitarian news portal, and to the United Nations World Food Programme (www.hewsweb.org).

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Notes to Editors:

Wind Speed Probability Product:

The product is developed by modelling the errors in the forecast track and intensity of historical tropical storms. Each 'wind speed probability' graphic displays the probabilities (in percent) that 1-min sustained wind speeds of at least hurricane Cat 1 strength (64kt or 74 mph) and/or 1-min sustained wind speeds of at least tropical storm strength (34kt or 39 mph) will occur at each specific point on the map during a given time period out to 120 hours. The probabilities are shown from 1% to 100% in colour-coded 5% bands. To aid guidance a Table relates the probabilities to simple descriptions that the event will happen. For example, a probability of 50% indicates a medium or evens-chance that the event will occur. Major cities are included on the maps to aid risk assessment.

Prior Wind Affected Areas Product:

The product maps the maximum possible extent of areas currently and previously affected by 1-min sustained winds of hurricane Cat 1 strength and/or by 1-min sustained winds of tropical storm strength.

About Tropical Storm Risk (TSR):

Founded in 2000, Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) offers a leading resource for forecasting the risk from tropical storms worldwide. The venture provides innovative forecast products to benefit risk awareness and decision making in (re)insurance, other business sectors, government and society. The TSR consortium is co-sponsored by Benfield, the leading independent reinsurance intermediary, Royal & Sun Alliance, the global insurance group, and Crawford & Company, a global claims management solutions company. The TSR scientific grouping brings together climate physicists, meteorologists and statisticians at University College London and the Met Office. www.tropicalstormrisk.com