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Tropical Storm Risk anticipates near-norm 2012 hurricane season

Tropical Storm Risk (TSR), which provides real-time mapping and prediction of tropical cyclone windfields worldwide and is co-sponsored by Aon Benfield, today releases its pre-season outlook* for the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season, running from 1 June to 30 November 2012. The outlook anticipates Atlantic basin and U.S. landfalling hurricane activity being close to their long-term (1950-2010) norm values but 10-40% below their norm values for the last 10-years (2002-2011).

TSR, part of Aon Benfield Research's academic and industry collaboration, slightly raises its April forecast. The pre-season outlook includes:

- A 34% probability of an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season, a 36% probability of a near-normal season, and a 30% chance of a below-normal season.
- 13 tropical storms including six hurricanes and three intense hurricanes. This compares to long-term norms of 11, six and three respectively.
- An ACE (Accumulated Cyclone Energy) value of 98. The long-term norm is 103.

For U.S. landfalling activity referenced to long-term norm values, TSR forecasts:

- A 48% probability of above-normal U.S. landfalling hurricane activity; a 26% likelihood of a near-normal season, and a 26% chance of a below-normal season.
- Four tropical storm strikes on the U.S., including two hurricanes. This compares to long-term norms of three and 1.5 respectively.

Three main climate factors will determine the level of hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin. Occurring in August and September, these are the speed of trade winds over the tropical North Atlantic, sea temperatures in the tropical North Atlantic, and the sign and strength of El Niño Southern Oscillation. U.S. landfalling hurricane activity is influenced by July tropospheric wind patterns over the North Atlantic and U.S., and by the level of hurricane activity occurring at sea.

Professor Mark Saunders at Tropical Storm Risk, said: "At present the main climate indicators point to the 2012 hurricane season being close to norm. However, uncertainties remain and we are overdue US landfalling hurricane strikes. Only one hurricane (Irene) has struck the US in the last 3 years and no major hurricane has struck the US since Wilma in 2005. On average 4 or 5 landfalling hurricanes would strike the US in 3 years and 4 major hurricanes would strike over 6 years. Nature has a habit of correcting herself."

Despite the success of recent basin forecasts sources of uncertainty remain. Model projections of ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) conditions for August-September currently show a range from

neutral ENSO to moderate El Niño. There is uncertainty in how warm the tropical North Atlantic ocean will be in August-September. Also variance exists in the level of basin hurricane activity possible from the same August-September climate factors and, as seen in recent years, even larger variance exists in the level of US landfalling hurricane activity possible from the same basin activity.

TSR's next hurricane forecast will be issued on 5 June.

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* TSR Pre-Season Hurricane Forecast Report
Please click here to view a copy of the report issued today entitled "TSR Pre-Season Forecast for Atlantic Hurricane Activity in 2012".

About TSR
Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) has issued seasonal forecasts for Atlantic hurricane activity for 15 years. For each of the last 4 years the TSR pre-season forecast for the Atlantic ACE (Accumulated Cyclone Energy) index has been within 15% of the observed values. The ACE index is a measure of the collective intensity and duration of all tropical storms over the season. TSR also offers world-leading products for mapping and predicting the windfields of active tropical cyclones worldwide in real-time. Led by Professor Mark Saunders, TSR is affiliated to University College London (UCL) and sponsored by Aon Benfield and Crawford & Company.

About Aon Benfield Research
The Aon Benfield Research team is responsible for monitoring and analyzing reinsurers and the reinsurance industry and providing insights that help our clients to make informed decisions for their businesses. Aon Benfield Research also brings together our academic relationships under one banner to deliver a wealth of relevant academic research material. We combine world class academic research with Aon Benfield's industry-leading catastrophe modeling, actuarial analysis and broking expertise to create a more risk aware world.

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