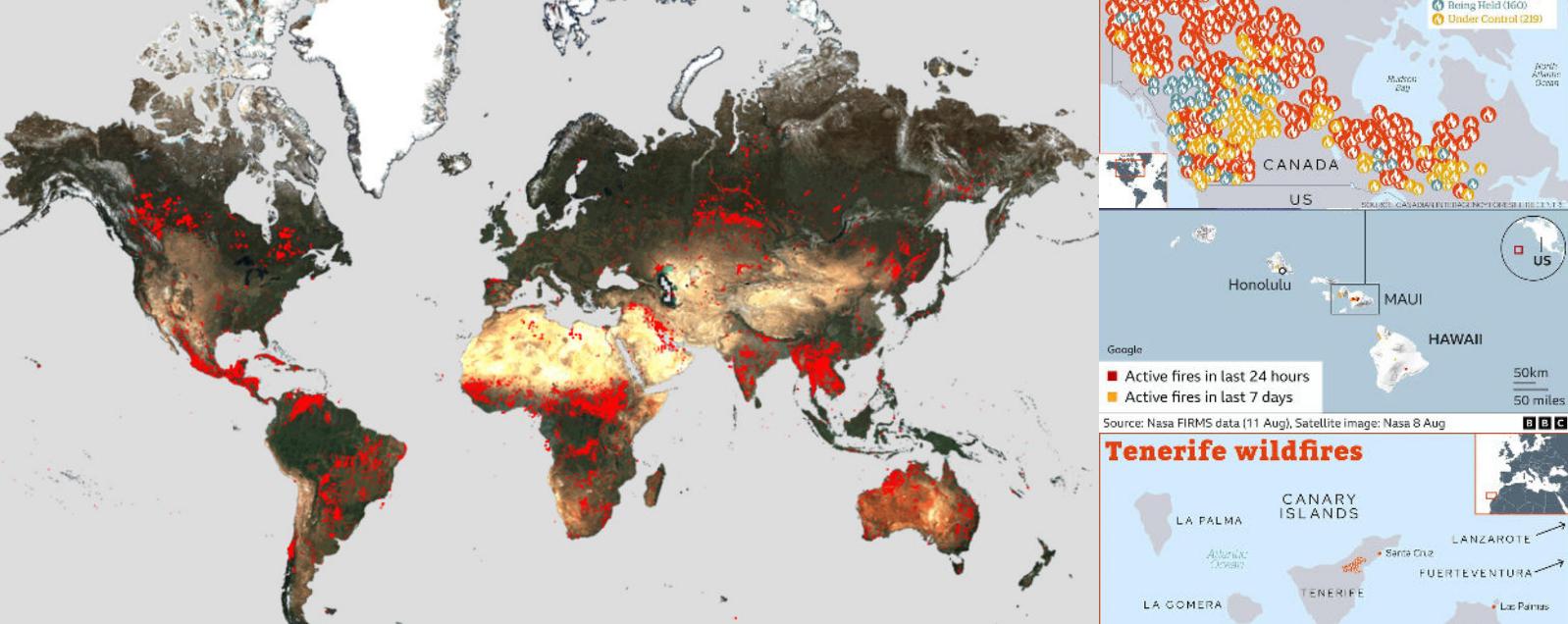




FOREST FIRES

While wildfires are a natural part of many ecosystems, scientists have warned that they are becoming more frequent and more widespread, due to climate change. In response, an upgraded version of ESA's World Fire Atlas is now available providing a detailed analysis of the **11 571** wildfires across the globe.

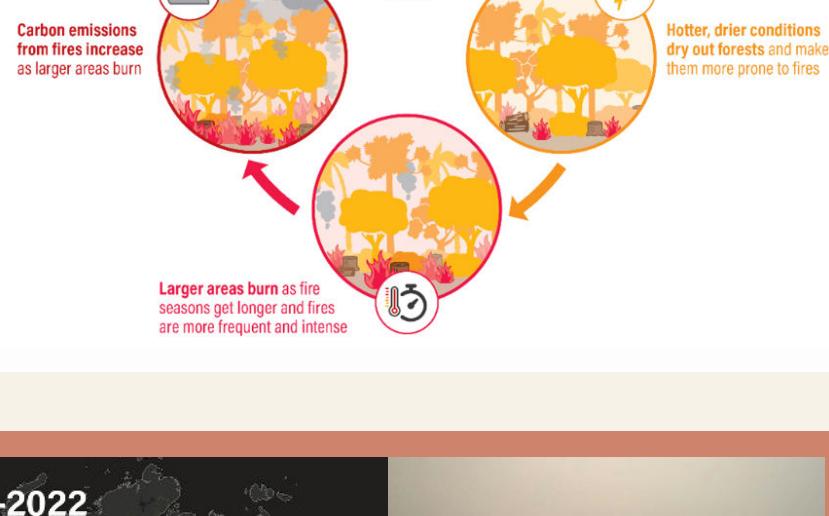


2021 was one of the worst years for forest fires since the turn of the century, causing an alarming 9.3 million hectares of tree cover loss globally — over one-third of all tree cover loss that occurred that year. Though down from the previous year, over 6.6 million hectares of tree cover was lost to forest fires in 2022, similar to other years over the past decade. And in 2023, the world has already seen heightened fire activity, including record-breaking burns: +4% deforestation around the world compared to last year.

Global deforestation

Nearly 6.6 million hectares have been lost, including 4.1 million hectares of primary tropical forests, which are extremely valuable for the climate, biodiversity and the regulation of various cycles, such as water. The tropical region of Latin America and the Caribbean has been particularly hard hit, with Brazil, Indonesia, Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Canada accounting for the largest areas of deforested land in absolute terms. These thousands of historic forest fires alone emitted the equivalent of more than 1 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (annual emissions of the 5th most polluting country).

Climate Change Is Making Fires Worse



Global tree cover loss due to fires, 2001-2022



Huge forest fires are currently ravaging Bolivia, leading to the closure of many schools because of the resulting air pollution. (October 23 - Santa Cruz)

News of Hope

Reforestation work around the world represents around 1 billion trees planted every year. This is the equivalent of nearly 32 trees planted every second (counter) in an attempt to offset global deforestation. To compensate for the number of trees lost over the last 10 years, 130 million hectares would have to be planted.

Given the scale and urgency of the challenges, the UN recommends restoring 1 billion hectares by 2030 in its report "Ecosystem Reforestation for People, Nature and Climate" (2021). With an average of 6 million hectares replanted each year during the 2010 decade, the current rate of replanting falls well short of this target, and is even far from covering the areas lost, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (2020), despite ambitious projects such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel.

