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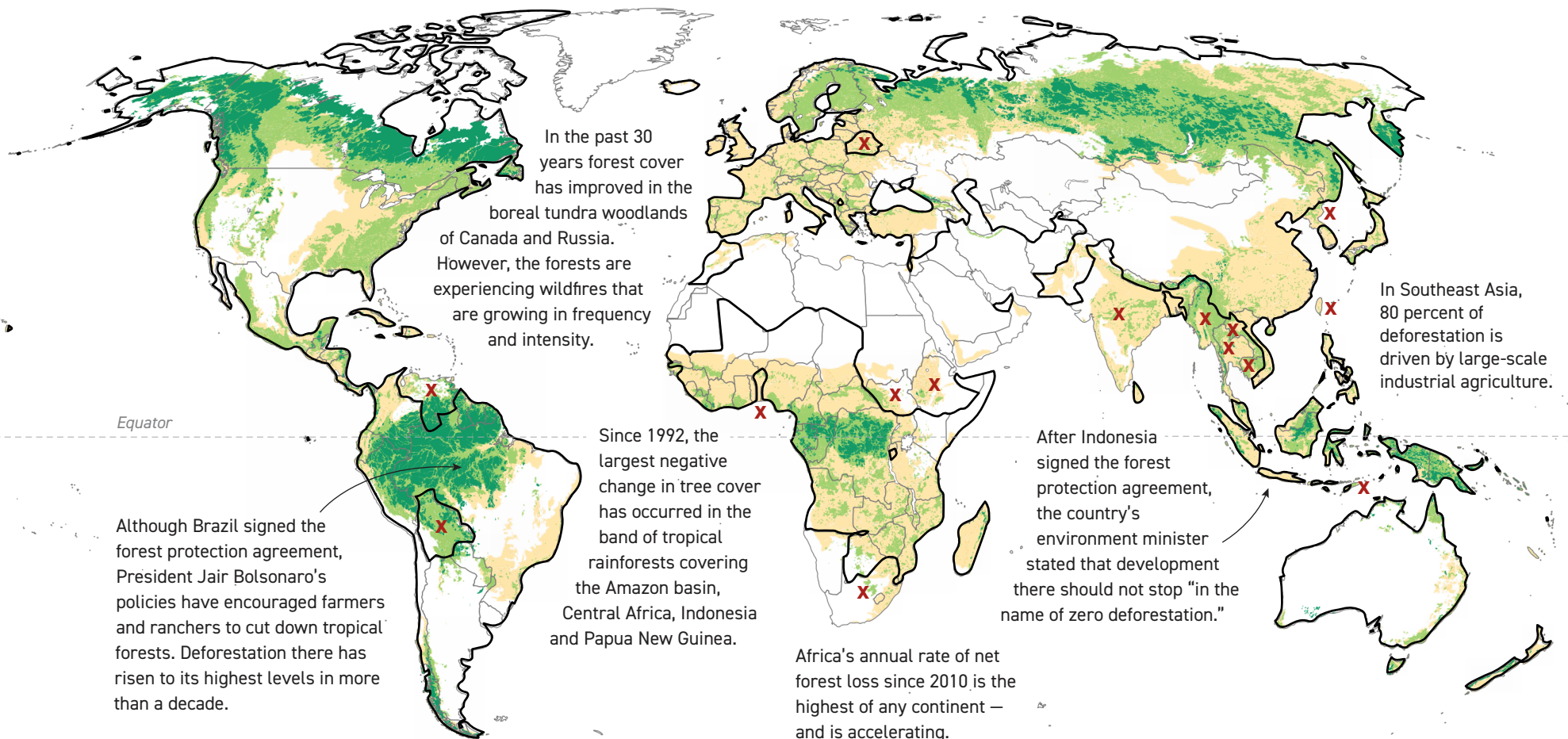
Forests continue to fall to expanding agriculture, even as world leaders agree to save them

At COP26, 141 countries, holding more than 90 percent of the world's forests, pledged to save and restore the planet's forests through sustainable agriculture, conservation, protection, trade policies and financial strategies. The agreement is nonbinding.

Forests cover nearly a third of Earth's land and are home to much of the world's biodiversity. As significant carbon sinks, they play a key role in reducing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Only about half of remaining forests are relatively intact – of large size with little human influence – and their loss continues at a rapid rate. In 2020 the planet lost about 100,000 square miles of forest, 16,000 square miles of which were intact humid tropical forests. About half of those were replaced by agriculture, such as cattle ranching, soybean farming and oil palm plantations.

Where forests are included under COP26 declaration

- Areas covered by agreement
- X - Once-heavily forested countries not signing the declaration
- Historical extent of forests; since converted to agricultural, industrial and urban use
- Degraded forests; significant human influence
- Intact forests



Sources: U.N. FAO, Global Forest Watch, U.N. Environment Programme, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, World Resources Institute, NASA, University of Maryland, Intact Forest Landscapes, Center for Global Development, POLITICO staff reports, UKCOP26.org, Foreign Policy