

Global warming linked to wildfires, says UN climate chief

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A firefighter monitors a back burn near Mount Victoria in the Blue Mountains on October 21, 2013

Wildfires are "absolutely" linked to global warming and increasingly intense heatwaves, the UN climate chief has said, as bushfires burned out of control in Australia.

The comments come as debate rages in Australia—whose new Prime Minister Tony Abbott once described the science behind man-made

climate change as "absolute crap"—about whether there is a link between the infernos and [global warming](#).

Asked in an interview with CNN if there was a link between climate and wildfires, Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said "yes there is, absolutely".

"The World Meteorological Organization has not established a direct link between this wildfire and climate change – yet," Figueres said.

"But what is absolutely clear is the science is telling us that there are increasing heatwaves in Asia, Europe, and Australia, that these will continue, that they will continue in their intensity and in their frequency."

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology data shows that 2013 is on track to become the country's hottest year on record, surpassing the previous mark set in 2005, according to the non-profit think tank Climate Council.

Last month was the hottest September ever recorded in Australia, with national average temperatures 2.75 degrees Celsius higher than the long-term average, it said.



Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, at a press conference in Germany on May 25, 2012

Debate has raged about whether climate change has contributed to the bushfires blazing out of control west of Sydney, which have so far destroyed several hundred homes and cost one man his life.

Figueres said Abbott's decision to repeal a carbon tax on emissions designed to combat [climate change](#) put in place by the previous government would come at a high price politically.

"We are really already paying the price of carbon," she said. "We are paying the price with [wildfires](#), we are paying the price with droughts."

Figueres called for action to address rising [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

"What we have seen are just introductions to the doom and gloom that we could be facing. But that's not the only scenario," she said.

"We could—as humankind—we could take vigorous action and we could have a very, very different scenario. That's a scenario that is worth examining.

"We have very little time," she added. "The important thing is that we still have time, although inasmuch as we delay, we are closing the window upon ourselves."

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