



“There is much we can learn from other cultures and countries on how to hope and act together with Creation”

Season of Creation 2024



TRAINING REFLECTION  
June - August 2024

## Caring for our Common Home for the benefit of future generations Joining forces to take action together

### Introduction

For several years now, **AIC has been actively committed to sustainable development**. The last two international assemblies in 2017<sup>1</sup> and 2023<sup>2</sup> have spent time working on this topic. These meetings provided an opportunity for AIC volunteers to share our experiences and best practices. They have also led to the creation of various training material designed to inform and raise awareness among AIC volunteers about this important issue, and to encourage us to set up initiatives and concrete actions to promote sustainable development<sup>3,4</sup>.

Taking care of our common home and promoting integral ecology has become a **permanent priority** within our international network. Numerous AIC initiatives are evidence of this. But we can and must go further!

The **aim** of this training reflection is to encourage us all to take action to take better care of our common home for the sake of future generations. This reflection **proposes several concrete ways of acting together** to achieve **greater impact**.

This reflection gives us an opportunity to respond to Pope Francis’s call to “*journey in communion and commitment*”, “*to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful*”<sup>5</sup>. It’s also a great way to put into practice two of our AIC priorities: moving forward together (PLA 2) and being open to and welcoming change (PLA 3).

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the International Assembly 2017 on the theme “400 years with Saint Vincent on a journey towards the future in our Common Home”, pp. 51-66 : <https://www.aic-international.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/12/Acts-ASD-2017-ENG-Final-avec-couv.pdf#page=51>.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the International Assembly 2023 on the theme “Citizens of the world, walking united in hope”, pp. 17-29: <https://www.aic-international.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/2023-07-AIC-Training-Reflection-International-Assembly-Proceedings-EN.pdf#page=17>.

<sup>3</sup> AIC training booklet n°27 (2018): <https://www.aic-international.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/05/AIC-Training-booklet-Sustainable-development-2018-EN.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> AIC training booklet n°44 (2022): <https://www.aic-international.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/09/2022-09-AIC-Training-Reflection-Sustainable-Development-EN.pdf#page=2>.

<sup>5</sup> *Laudate deum* 69.



***Let's be creative and take action!  
You will find below 7 suggestions for taking action together***

### **1. The Dominique Prize for Sustainable Development 2024**

As already mentioned, many AIC groups around the world are already doing wonderful work to protect the environment. Since 2018, some of this work has been recognized through AIC International's biennial Dominique Prize for Sustainable Development.

What is the Dominique Prize? AIC received a legacy from a former member of the International Secretariat and in 2018 it was decided to use part of this legacy to create a Prize in her memory. Its objective is to encourage actions that promote sustainable development within the AIC network.

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024, World Environment Day, we launched the fourth edition of the Dominique Prize in a letter sent to National Presidents with a call for AIC projects to take care of our common home.

As in previous years, the winning projects will be shared with the entire AIC network, along with all the projects that meet the criteria set for this Prize<sup>6</sup>. It's a great opportunity to showcase what AIC volunteers around the world are doing to protect our planet and inspire other groups to take similar actions.

It is sometimes possible to procure subsequent funding for other projects submitted, even if they have not won the prize. This is another good reason to send in your projects.

#### **Questions to discuss in your groups**

1. Is your group involved in or planning to implement an action or project that could be eligible for the Dominique Prize? Contact your National President and present her your initiative. She can provide you with all the necessary information and criteria to participate.
2. Could you add a sustainable development aspect to an action or project that is already underway?
3. Do you feel inspired by the projects presented by the previous winners of the Dominique Prize and/or published on the AIC website? Would it be possible to do something similar in your area?

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<sup>6</sup> See the news article published in 2022 announcing the winners of the last Dominique Prize, with a link to the letters announcing the results of the Dominique Prize 2020 and 2018: <https://www.aic-international.org/en/2022/12/20/dominique-prize-sustainable-development-2022/>.

## 2. Join the *Season of Creation 2024* (1<sup>st</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October)



The *Season of Creation* is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all Creation through **celebration, conversion and commitment**. It is an annual ecumenical time when we pray and act together as a Christian family for our common home<sup>7</sup>. The celebration begins on 1<sup>st</sup> September, the Feast of Creation, and ends on 4<sup>th</sup> October, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology.

This year's theme is: "To Hope and Act with Creation". In the context of the current ecological crisis, as believers, we are called to raise the hope inspired by our faith, the hope of the resurrection. As the organisers of this initiative make clear, this is not a hope without action, but rather a hope embodied in concrete actions of prayer and a call to conversion, service and solidarity<sup>8</sup>.

AIC International invites all members to join in this initiative, as we journey together as a Church in support of this common cause. Further information and concrete proposals for this time of communion will be sent to you at a later date.

## 3. The launch of a huge AIC tree planting campaign

The AIC International team has decided to launch a **tree planting campaign** throughout the AIC network: a concrete and visible action to help protect our planet and improve the quality of life of current and future generations.



Tree planting offers **numerous environmental benefits**, including climate regulation, improved air quality, preservation of biodiversity, soil protection and prevention of erosion. It also has **social benefits**: improved mental and physical health, promotion of community spirit, and environmental education and awareness.

The campaign will be officially launched on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024, the day of the Feast of Creation and the start of the *Season of Creation 2024*.

Further details will be announced in August.

In the meantime, **don't hesitate to share any initiatives you have in this area with us.**

## 4. Invitation to write a shared commitment together

As AIC volunteers, we strive to achieve the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#), as well as respond to Pope Francis's call to take care of our common home for the benefit of future generations.

<sup>7</sup> Season of Creation 2024 – Celebration Guide 'To Hope and Act with Creation', p. 17:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12M3weSD4D2mvjCiI3Mxen3JQZ5Rrazz3/view>.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p. 3.



AIC International would like to **draft a shared commitment** that would apply to all volunteers in the AIC network: a commitment to being responsible, raising awareness and taking action to protect our Common Home.

This commitment concerns all of us and so we would really appreciate your input in order to make the text truly representative of our network.

### Question to discuss in your groups

What do you feel is important to include in AIC's international commitment to protect our common home?

Please **send your ideas and suggestions** to the AIC International Secretariat **by 15th July 2024**: [info@aic-international.org](mailto:info@aic-international.org)

## 5. Creation of a new sustainable development space on the AIC website

A lot of actions to protect the environment are already underway in many AIC groups around the world. AIC International would like to **showcase these actions in a new specially dedicated section of the AIC website**. This space would be for actions, projects, events and inspiring messages linked to sustainable development.

The aim is to **encourage** both other AIC groups and people who are external to AIC to **replicate these actions** in their local area, or to **feel inspired to undertake similar actions**.

Another objective is to create a **map to give visibility to all AIC initiatives around the world** to highlight the value of what is already being carried out within our international network.

Finally, the page will also be a **valuable resource for our international representatives**, who use examples of AIC actions to make the voices of people living in poverty heard within international organisations such as the ECOSOC, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

### Question to discuss in your groups

Do you have a sustainable development project that could inspire volunteers and that you would like to see published on the AIC International website?

We are interested in hearing about **any action, no matter how small**.

***Every little step is an essential contribution to take care of our common home!***

Please share your actions with the International Secretariat: [info@aic-international.org](mailto:info@aic-international.org).

## 6. Creation of transnational reflection groups

***The time for action is now!***

To reinforce our response to the climate crisis, AIC International would like to set up **online transnational discussion groups**, open to any AIC volunteer who would like to discuss issues such as:



- How climate change is impacting your local area
- Actions that you are taking on an individual level and as an AIC volunteer to protect the environment
- Ideas of common actions that could be taken in the future

One of the biggest strengths of our international network is our ability to share experiences and best practices from around the world.

### Question to discuss in your groups

Are you concerned about the urgency of the climate crisis? Would you like to be able to exchange experiences, ideas and solutions with other like-minded AIC volunteers from across the world?

If you would be interested in participating in a discussion group, please contact the AIC International Secretariat: [info@aic-international.org](mailto:info@aic-international.org).

*Together we are stronger!*

## 7. Other actions we can all take on a personal level

As AIC volunteers, it is also our responsibility to continuously look for ways to **make our own personal actions and behaviours more eco-friendly** in order to reduce our carbon footprint. Lots of suggestions of actions we can take as individuals to protect the environment were made in the AIC training reflection on sustainable development, published in 2022<sup>9</sup>.

However, new ideas appear all the time and it is important to stay informed. Here are two additional recommendations that we would like to share with you:

### 1. Reducing our digital carbon footprint

Did you know that sending a 1MB email releases about 3.5g of CO<sub>2</sub>? Or that 3.7% of global greenhouse gas emissions are linked to internet usage<sup>10</sup>, and that this figure is rising?



Here are some tips to keep our inbox eco-friendly:

- We should avoid sending emails with heavy attachments when possible. For example, a PDF file is normally lighter than a PowerPoint.
- If we are using a mailing list, it should be kept up to date. We should avoid sending emails to people who don't need or want to receive them.
- Deleting emails that we don't need any more. This helps to reduce the amount of energy used in the big data centres that store the servers that host our digital accounts. The same

<sup>9</sup> AIC training booklet n°44 (2022): <https://www.aic-international.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/09/2022-09-AIC-Training-Reflection-Sustainable-Development-EN.pdf#page=2>.

<sup>10</sup> Reducing email's carbon footprint: <https://www.mailjet.com/blog/email-best-practices/email-carbon-footprint/>.



applies to documents that are shared online via applications such as Google Drive or OneDrive. If the document no longer needs to be shared, we can save a copy on our own computer and/or delete it from the cloud.

## 2. Offsetting the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced when we travel

When we travel, within the context of our mission at AIC or for personal reasons, our journey generates carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), which contributes to global warming. The most polluting forms of travel are cruises and flights.

It is best to avoid flying whenever possible. However, if we have to fly, it is often possible to offset or compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> produced during our journey by making a small donation to an organisation when the flight is purchased. The organisation will use the money for a project that absorbs CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, such as tree planting, and this helps to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced from flying.

There are many projects within the AIC international network that we could support if we wanted to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced during our trip. To avoid bank fees, the simplest thing to do would be to identify a sustainable development project in our national association to which we could contribute in order to make this compensation.

According to one website that calculates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced during travel, for every kilogram of CO<sub>2</sub> generated, about 0.03 EUR should be donated to compensate for the environmental impact of the journey<sup>11</sup>.

### Questions to discuss in your groups

1. Do you have a lot of emails that you don't need in your inbox? When could you set some time aside to delete them?
2. Had you heard of the concept of offsetting your travel emissions before? Is this something you would consider for a journey you have taken recently or one you are planning to take soon?
3. Is there any AIC project in your country to which you could donate in order to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> produced when you travel? If not, what project could you start to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> or promote sustainable development?

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*Reflection compiled by: Catherine Avery, Tayde de Callataj and Milagros Galisteo  
together with the Working group on Sustainable development, June 2024*

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<sup>11</sup> The website [Green Tripper](#) (available in English and French) allows us to enter the start and end points of our journey and calculate how much CO<sub>2</sub> is generated, depending on the means of transport we use (plane, car, train, etc.), as well as how much we should donate to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> pollution caused by our journey. For example, this website estimates that a one-way flight from London to Paris in economy class generates 211.98kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per person, so the suggested donation is about 6.35 EUR. The amount of CO<sub>2</sub> produced by our journey may be indicated on our plane ticket. The calculations cited here have been extrapolated from tests made using the website.