Solar panels are seen on the roof of the Paul VI audience hall at the Vatican in this Dec. 1, 20

Solar panels are seen on the roof of the Paul VI audience hall at the Vatican in this Dec. 1, 2010, file photo. The assembly of the Synod of Bishops Oct. 4-29 will be held in the audience hall and the synod office is committed to offsetting the gathering's carbon footprint. (CNS/Paul Haring)



by Catholic News Service

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Vatican City — September 19, 2023
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With more than 450 people gathering at the Vatican from around the world for a monthlong meeting, the General Secretariat of the Synod said it is taking action to reduce the environmental impact of the synod assembly.

Making the event plastic free, eliminating waste, using only recycled paper and only when necessary are part of the plan, but with more than 50% of the assembly's calculated carbon footprint coming from long-distance travel, the Vatican has secured financial support from the Switzerland-based SOS Planet Foundation to generate offsetting carbon credits by sending "efficient cooking stoves and water purification technologies to households, communities and institutions" in Kenya and Nigeria.

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The first assembly of the Synod of Bishops is scheduled to meet at the Vatican Oct. 4-29. A second assembly is planned for October 2024.

Announcing the carbon-offset plan Sept. 19, the synod office also noted that the synod's opening day is when Pope Francis has said he will publish a follow-up document to his 2015 encyclical, "*Laudato Si*', On Care for Our Common Home."

The choice of fuel-efficient cook stoves and water purification systems "responds to the criterion of integral ecology" *Laudato Si*' called for by combining concern for the environment, attention to local needs and concrete assistance to people, the synod office said.

Read this next: Pope Francis' new environmental exhortation to be released on Oct. 4
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