



## ANNUAL REVIEW 2024 ACTION PLAN 2025



**The Hague, January 2025**

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**LINKS EUROPE**  
**ANNUAL REVIEW 2024**  
**ACTION PLAN 2025**

**Editor:**  
Maximiliaan van Lange, Deputy Director

The Hague, January, 2025

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## MESSAGES FROM LINKS EUROPE



**MESSAGE FROM LINKS EUROPE  
DIRECTOR, DENNIS SAMMUT**

2024 was a successful, albeit challenging, year for LINKS Europe.

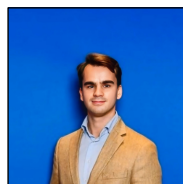
Despite the turbulence in the international system, uncertainty regarding funding, and small local difficulties, LINKS Europe kept punching above its weight, on a number of issues in which we have developed expertise.

Two developments are worth highlighting: In the summer of 2024, we wound up the work of the Joint Armenian-Azerbaijani Liaison Group on Confidence-building measures in support of lasting peace in the South Caucasus (JOLIG). Since its inception in 2021, JOLIG made an important contribution to the discussion on Armenia and Azerbaijan peace. Its report of 2 April 2022 remains valid. We are pleased to build on this work in 2025 with initiatives that are relevant to today's realities.

In 2024, we engaged in the global debate on climate change, peace and security. The Bonn Dialogue Meeting (May 2024), the Bonn Contact Group (May-October 2024), and the Berlin Meeting (October 2024) engaged with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Our three substantial reports on "Food Insecurity", "Water scarcity", and "Land Degradation" made an important contribution to the debate, and need to be studied further. We will build on this work in 2025.

You can read about these initiatives and more in this Annual Review and Action Plan.

**Dennis Sammut**  
*Director, LINKS Europe*



**MESSAGE FROM LINKS EUROPE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND EDITOR  
OF THE ANNUAL REVIEW 2024,  
MAXIMILIAAN VAN LANGE**

I am proud to present the LINKS Europe Annual Report and Action Plan, a year marked by both significant challenges and important milestones. One of the highlights was our work to promote peace and dialogue amid growing global tensions.

In 2024, we saw an increased focus on addressing the nexus between climate change and conflict. Our efforts to elevate these issues on the international agenda have been increasingly recognised.

Internally, we took steps to innovate our approaches and deepen our partnerships with think-tanks, civil society organisations and international bodies. Initiatives such as the Bonn Contact Group exemplify our collaborative spirit and determination to address multiple global challenges.

As we move towards 2025, I thank our team, partners and supporters who have made this work possible. Together, we remain steadfast in our mission to promote peace and stability in Europe and its neighbourhood.

**Maximiliaan van Lange**  
*Deputy Director, LINKS Europe*





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## PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

As more and more countries become embroiled in conflict of one kind or another, more and more people are coming to value peace. The war in Ukraine has brought Europeans closer to war than they have been in more than seventy years. Now, not a day goes by without some political or military leader saying that Europeans must prepare for war.

Of course, in the Middle East, Africa and many other parts of the world, conflict was already a daily occurrence.

LINKS Europe strongly believes that dialogue is an essential tool for preventing and ending conflict, and building peace. Even when dealing with a force that is essentially evil and has shown no respect for a rules-based international system, such as Putin's Russia, dialogue is necessary. Sometimes the space for dialogue is limited. This is where civil society can play an important role. LINKS Europe sees itself as part of the mosaic that supports peace through dialogue in different scenarios. As trust is an important prerequisite, it takes time for any organisation trying to facilitate dialogue to be effective.

A second tool that can contribute to peace is confidence building. Although much has been written on the subject, the concept of overcoming mistrust and misperceptions is still not well understood. Confidence-building measures can be used at any point in a conflict or conflict resolution process, as long as all parties involved are aware of their limitations but accept their importance. The LINKS network has fine-tuned this important tool over three decades and will continue to use its expertise wherever possible and where it adds value.

### ABOUT LINKS EUROPE

We aspire for a peaceful, secure and prosperous Europe, in friendship and solidarity with its neighbourhood.

Learn more on our website:

[www.links-europe.eu](http://www.links-europe.eu)

For more information on LINKS Europe, please contact: [office@links-europe.eu](mailto:office@links-europe.eu)

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# EU4PEACE III PROGRAMME

## LINKS Europe initiative - An Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue best suited for today's realities

In 2025, LINKS Europe, as part of the EU4Peace III initiative, will convene five thematic groups to promote broader discussions within Armenian and Azerbaijani societies on bilateral relations. These groups, each consisting of 10 participants per country, will cover five themes:

- 1. Peace and Security;**
- 2. Climate Change & Green Economy;**
- 3. Governance;**
- 4. Regional Connectivity;**
- 5. Gender & Diversity.**

The results will be disseminated through publications on commonspace.eu, the Caucasus Concise newsletter and international forums. Half of the participants are drawn from LINKS Europe's existing network, while the other half are new, with the aim of involving around 100 experts, activists and opinion-shapers.

Each group meets twice: a physical meeting in a neutral country and a hybrid meeting. Coordinators guide the processes and develop policy papers to be presented at a final forum. The initiative is strategically supported by an advisory platform and builds on previous successes such as the 1st South Caucasus Youth Peace Summer School.

## Armenia-Azerbaijan Expert Political Dialogue Platform

In addition, LINKS Europe is establishing the platform to inform and assist its work in particular as regards Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, efforts to establish lasting peace between them and wider regional issues in which Armenia or Azerbaijan, or both, are involved. The platform will particularly support LINKS Europe in the delivery of its component under the EU-funded EU4Peace programme.

The platform shall consist of a chairperson, and three persons each from Armenia and Azerbaijan who shall not have government positions and who shall have a track record of work in the think tank/ngo world in their respective countries. They will be appointed by LINKS Europe in consultation with its local partners.

EU4Peace is implemented by a consortium of organisations working to foster peace and co-operation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The initiative includes the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), facilitating domestic and youth dialogues; the Restart Initiative and the Hertie School, focusing on economic connectivity and technical discussions; Peace Dialogue and Azerbaijani networks, advocating for conflict-affected populations; LINKS Europe, broadening discussions on peace and policy; the Imagine Center, building peace networks and analytical outreach; and Bright Garden Voices (BGV), facilitating thematic online and in-person youth dialogues.



### ABOUT EU4PEACE III PROGRAMME

The EU4Peace III programme, supported and funded by the European Union, aims to contribute to the sustainable normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. By broadening the engagement of social groups, the initiative aims to link political processes to wider societal transformation.





## 'LANDMINE FREE SOUTH CAUCASUS'

On 1 March 2024, LINKS Europe published a report on the future of landmine action advocacy in the South Caucasus based on a consultation process with stakeholders between June 2023 and February 2024. The report focuses on the regional campaign "Landmine Free South Caucasus", which was implemented from October 2018 to December 2023.

A formal consultation process was held from 15 January to 15 February 2024, through an open call to which anyone could reply. In the course of the consultation process, LINKS Europe held 22 in-person meetings, 12 online meetings, and received written submissions from several partners.

Based on twelve valuable recommendations that emerged from the consultation process, the following five immediate steps were taken:

**1. The LFSC campaign ceased to operate in its current form; LINKS Europe retained ownership of the brand and logo to prevent misuse.**

**2. Work on grassroots engagement, education and awareness-raising, and media capacity building was separated from policy development and advocacy. LINKS Europe shifted its focus to the latter.**

**3. LINKS Europe increased the frequency of its electronic newsletter, the South Caucasus Landmine Observer, initially to bi-monthly, and developed it as a resource for other stakeholders.**

**4. LINKS Europe focused its efforts on working with the three governments, the international community and other stakeholders - both local and international - to develop policy issues related to landmine action in the South Caucasus.**

**5. LINKS Europe worked with the current COP Troika countries (United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan and Brazil) to support the inclusion of global action on landmines on the agenda of COP.**





# BONN DIALOGUE MEETING

A dialogue meeting on "Climate Change, Peace and Security - COP29 and Beyond" took place on 3 May 2024 at the University Club in Bonn, Germany. The event brought together representatives from Parties to the Climate Convention, the UN Climate Change Secretariat and some 30 academic institutions, think tanks and civil society organisations. Participants reviewed the progress made since COP28 in Dubai and discussed strategies to continue these efforts at COP29 in Baku in November.

The opening session featured keynote addresses by H.E. Hana al Hashemi, UAE Chief Negotiator for COP28; H.E. Nigar Arpadarai, UN High-Level Champion for COP29 in Azerbaijan; Markus Hicken, Director for Energy, Foreign Policy, Climate and Security at the German Federal Foreign Office; and Maria Paloma Noriega Jalil of the UN Climate Secretariat.

The meeting featured intensive discussions on the intersection of climate change, peace and security within the COP process. Contributions were made by leading experts from institutions such as Chatham House, the German Council on Foreign Relations, ADELPHI, SOAS London, the University of Heidelberg and the Hertie School in Berlin.

Participants were positive about the achievements of COP28, including the integration of climate change, peace and security into the agenda, the holding of a dedicated "Peace Day" and the adoption of the "COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace". They stressed the importance of building on this momentum at COP29 in Baku and ensuring that these issues remain at the centre of discussions.



## ACTION POINTS

Three critical aspects of the agenda were highlighted: Water Scarcity, Food Insecurity and Landmine Contamination and Conflict-related environmental Degradation. Participants urged COP29 Parties to prioritise these issues, which directly affect millions of people around the world.



## THE BONN CONTACT GROUP ON CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY

The Bonn Contact Group on Climate Peace and Security ahead of COP29 brought together professionals, academics and civil society activists from across Europe and beyond to support the process of putting peace on the COP29 agenda.

The group was established at the end of the Bonn Dialogue Meeting, which took place in Bonn, Germany, on 3 May 2024. This landmark meeting brought together representatives of the COP28 and COP29 Presidencies, think tanks, civil society organisations, academics and other stakeholders for a dynamic exchange of ideas on how to build on the success of COP28 in Dubai. In particular, discussions focused on how to take forward the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace. It was considered crucial to ensure that the gains made in Dubai are not lost and that civil society should work with the Azerbaijani Presidency of COP29 to consolidate and develop these ideas.

Given the vast scope of the issue and the limitations of time and resources, the Bonn Contact Group decided to focus on three sub-themes: Food Insecurity, Water Scarcity, and Land Degradation.

The members of the Bonn Contact Group were organised into three Task Forces, each dealing with one of the sub-themes. Their role was to prepare reports on these issues to inform discussions and decision-making.

- To gather expertise on their respective topics and produce a report by September 2024 that is sufficiently robust to contribute to discussions at COP29.
- To engage with the COP Troika countries and other state and non-state parties on these issues in the run-up to COP29 in Baku and beyond.

### WHO WAS WHO?

The work of the Bonn Contact Group was coordinated by LINKS Europe Stichting. The general coordinators of the Bonn Contact Group were Dr. Dennis Sammut, Director of LINKS Europe; Leo Wigger from the Candid Foundation; and Isabelle McRae from Restart Initiative, who were part of the core team. LINKS Europe provided the secretariat and logistical support for the initiative. Around 30 European and international experts had signed up for the contact group.

# BERLIN MEETING AND THREE REPORTS ON ASPECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, PEACE AND SECURITY

The Bonn Contact Group on Climate, Peace and Security ahead of COP29, held its final report presentation on 9 October 2024 at the Hertie School in Berlin, Germany. The meeting was attended by representatives of Berlin-based civil society organisations, policy-makers, academics and international organisations. The meeting focused on three critical reports examining the intersections of climate change with water scarcity, land degradation and food insecurity. The event was organised by LINKS Europe in collaboration with the Restart Initiative and the Candid Foundation.

In her opening remarks, Isabelle McRae, Director of the Restart Initiative, explained the origins of the Bonn Contact Group and its aim to bring the nexus of conflict, peace and climate change onto the climate change agenda for COP29, mentioning the group's Bonn event on 3 May 2024 and commissioned reports. She also discussed integrated approaches to addressing climate change, food, water and land degradation issues, emphasising the importance of conflict sensitivity and cross-border cooperation.

During the event, Dr Amanda Woomer pre-

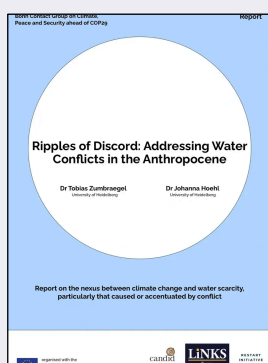
sented online the first report, "The Climate Change, Food Insecurity, and Conflict Nexus", which examines how climate-related disruptions to food systems exacerbate conflict in vulnerable regions. The second report, "Ripples of Discord: Addressing Water Conflicts in the Anthropocene", authored by Dr Tobias Zumbrägel and Dr Johanna Höhl, examines rising tensions over water resources in an increasingly unpredictable climate conditions. The third and final report, "Land Degradation: The 'Double Exposure' of ERW Contamination and Climate Change", was presented by Dr Sarah Njeri and Dr Christina Greene, who highlighted the compounded risks posed by climate change and explosive remnants of war (ERW) on degraded land.

The presentations were followed by a discussion and an engaging Q&A session, where participants exchanged views on how to address these intertwined challenges ahead of COP29. The discussion concluded with suggestions for addressing environmental challenges, including the creation of an International Solidarity Fund and the importance of stakeholder collaboration.

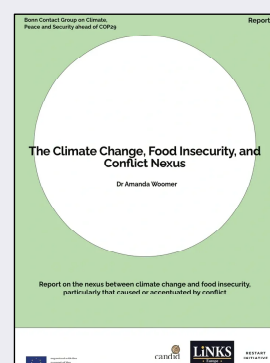
## THREE REPORTS PRODUCED BY THE BONN CONTACT GROUP



**"Land degradation: The 'double exposure' of ERW contamination and climate change"** by Dr Sarah Njeri and Dr Christina Greene



**"Ripples of Discord: Addressing Water Conflicts in the Anthropocene"** by Dr Tobias Zumbrägel and Dr Johanna Höhl



**"The Climate Change, Food Insecurity, and Conflict Nexus"** by Dr Amanda Woomer





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# LINKS EUROPE – ACTION PLAN FOR 2025

At a time of great turmoil in the international system, and as war and conflict ravage across the world, including Europe, the work of organisations like LINKS Europe becomes more urgent and important. As always, we believe in a just peace based on agreed frameworks and rule of law, which is why we consider the struggle currently being waged by the Ukrainian people in defence of their country to be legitimate.

## **(1) The South Caucasus remains a priority area**

The LINKS network has a long history of engagement in the post-Soviet South Caucasus. We have developed expertise in both analysing the region, and in deploying our tools of dialogue and confidence-building to help address problems and challenges. We have learned to avoid simplistic assessments and solutions to the region's complex problems. Peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains elusive, and the political situation in Georgia is fragile, and things are likely to get worse, before they get better.

Armenians in this initiative. In parallel, LINKS Europe will build on the past work and launch in a separate but mutually re-enforcing initiative, the Armenian-Azerbaijani Political Dialogue Platform, made up of seasoned experts and activists.

## **(c) Georgia**

We will support the democratic forces in Georgia, including through our online news outlets. When the time is right, we will launch the Georgia Contact Group to contribute towards Georgia's European aspirations.

## **(a) EU for Peace III**

We are pleased to be part of a Consortium, led by Conciliation Resources, that is implementing the new EU4Peace III programme that is funded and supported by the European Union. This collaborative action is unique for its scale and diversity. In 2025, we look forward to working together with the other partners for its success.

## **(b) Thematic Dialogues and the Armenian-Azerbaijani Expert Political Dialogue Platform**

In 2025, we will launch a series of thematic dialogues, with the participation of a new generation of thinkers and activists. We aim to involve up to one hundred Armenians and Azer-

## **(d) Regional campaign 'Landmine Free South Caucasus'**

We remain committed to work for a landmine free South Caucasus. We are disappointed that the governments of the three South Caucasus countries have not risen to the occasion and adopt the Ottawa Convention on banning landmines. We are also disappointed that funders have been inconsistent in supporting the work of those advocating a landmine free South Caucasus. LINKS Europe remains committed to this objective, including through its online publication "The South Caucasus Landmine Observer".





## **(2) Climate Change, Peace and Security**

In 2024, we worked hard to promote the linkage between climate change and peace and security. We are pleased that we could produce three reports that make a valid contribution to the global discussion. We will work hard to disseminate these reports and to engage on this issue.

## **(3) Just society: Rule of Law, Radicalisation and Peace Based on Justice**

Peace is meaningless unless it is based on justice. Radicalisation often breeds where in justice is rampant. Through our work, we will support the rule of law; peace based on justice, and the eradication of radicalisation and its root causes. In this work, we will focus particularly on Ukraine, Georgia and Yemen.

## **(4) Arabia and Central Asia**

Our "Concise" newsletters are making a useful contribution towards understanding two regions that are neighbours of the European Union, and are important for its security and prosperity. In the second half of 2025, we will organise, at a venue in Europe, a round table discussion on Central Asia.

## **(5) Reaching out – our communication tools**

For nearly 15 years, our flagship website, *com-monospace.eu*, has provided a space for debate and analysis on topics and countries that are often ignored by the mainstream media. We will continue doing so in 2025.

Our newsletters in the "Concise" series: Arabia Concise, Central Asia Concise and South Caucasus Concise have thousands of subscribers. They continue to be published and circulated free of charge. Our dynamic team work hard to deliver the newsletters on time to our readers and subscribers on time.

## **(6) Working together with partners and associates across the world**

LINKS Europe is, first and foremost, a network. Our partners, associates and contributors all over the world give the organisation its strength. Our small core-team based in The Hague works far beyond the call of duty. Together, they make LINKS Europe something special that is committed to doing good.





## COMMUNICATIONS AND ONLINE OUTREACH

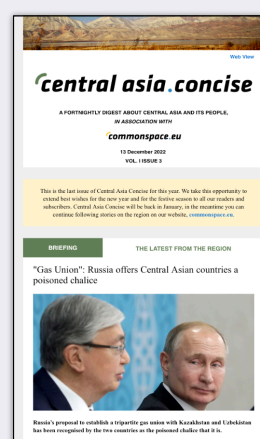
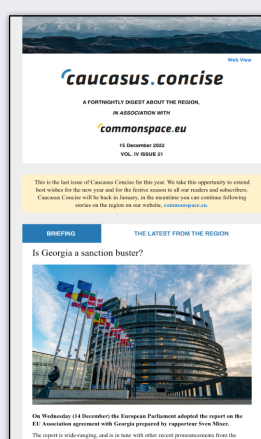
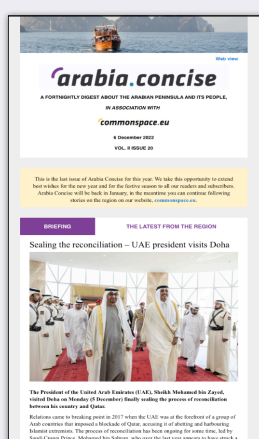
In 2024, LINKS Europe has continued to use a range of different online tools to disseminate its research and give voice to diverse opinions on issues related to our field of our work. These resources include our news portal *common-space.eu*; three fortnightly electronic newsletters: Arabia Concise; Caucasus Concise; Central Asia Concise; and our bi-monthly South Caucasus Landmine Observer newsletter.



## OUR FLAGSHIP WEBSITE COMMONSPACE.EU

As part of our online activities, LINKS Europe owns and manages *commonspace.eu*, an independent information and analysis website providing original content on a range of issues affecting Europe and its neighbourhood. It aims to provide accurate news, original analysis and a forum for diverse views and opinions.

### OUR FORTNIGHTLY 'CONCISE' NEWSLETTERS SERIES





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## **VIDEO DIARIES OF DENNIS SAMMUT REFLECTING ON MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF WORK IN COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

In 2024, LINKS Europe was pleased to announce the release of six video diaries recorded by its Director, Dennis Sammut, reflecting on more than three decades of work in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The six video diaries are available on YouTube:

[\*\*Episode 1: Russia - The Inelegant End of an Empire\*\*](#)

[\*\*Episode 2: Chechnya - A distant war that defined post-Soviet Russia\*\*](#)

[\*\*Episode 3: Georgia - The five people who defined post-Soviet Georgia\*\*](#)

[\*\*Episode 4: Georgia - Quo Vadis Sakartvelo\*\*](#)

[\*\*Episode 5: Armenia and Azerbaijan - Can enemies become friends?\*\*](#)

[\*\*Episode 6: Central Asia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine - What does the future hold?\*\*](#)

**Dennis Sammut said in a comment:** “I decided to make these video diaries when the war in Ukraine started in February 2022. I realised that many people were trying to understand what was going on without knowing and appreciating the background and context. Especially outside Europe, many saw the war through a Cold War prism - a struggle between Russia and the West. It was, in fact, a continuation of Russia’s ambition to reassert its dominance over neighbouring countries that had been part of the USSR until 1991. This Russian imperial ambition has been one of the main causes, sometimes triggering, but inevitably always fuelling, the many conflicts that have riddled the post-Soviet space since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since 1992 I have travelled extensively in this vast area and have been involved in many of the processes and efforts aimed at bringing peace to the people of this region. These diaries offer some personal observations and reflections. They do not claim to be scholarly or comprehensive, as they are largely episodic. They are however honest first-hand observations, which try to capture the mood amongst both the leaders and the common people, and are meant to inspire others, especially young people, to understand better, and study more, the region and its people. It is not essential that viewers agree with all my views – what is important is that these video diaries instil in them an interest to understand better, and know more. They can then draw their own conclusions.”



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## PARTNERS AND ASSOCIATES

LINKS Europe is able to strengthen its work through co-operation with a range of different partners in the Netherlands, the European Union, and worldwide. Our partnerships range from formal partnerships as part of consortia to implement specific projects, to looser and more informal ad hoc partnerships as a part of networks or specific activities, or simply to share knowledge and information.

In 2024, the European Union, the Restart Initiative, the Candid Foundation and the Hertie School in Berlin were strategic partners with whose support we implemented important projects, such as the implementation of the Bonn Contact Group on Climate Peace and Security ahead of COP29, where we brought together professionals, academics and civil society activists from across Europe and beyond.

Conciliation Resources (London), and The Hague Humanity Hub (The Hague) were among the key partners in the delivery of our work.





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## OUR TEAM

LINKS Europe works with a small core team of professionals based in The Hague and a network of associates, partners and supporters around the world. A lot of LINKS Europe's work is carried out by unpaid volunteers who share our aims and vision. We are grateful to all of our staff and associates who contribute to the organisation above and beyond the normal call of duty.

Our team in The Hague, led by Director Dennis Sammut, has grown significantly in recent years. Since 2019, Maximiliaan van Lange has been part of the team and was promoted to Deputy Director in September 2024. We also extend our gratitude to our four dedicated Project Research Associates—Anri Stepanian, Alexandra Dumitrescu, Maja Cortinovic, and Silvan Löchteken—for their valuable contributions to our work.

Unlike traditional 'get me coffee and copy my papers' internships, LINKS Europe has partnered with Leiden University's Honours College Governance and Global Affairs to offer 6-month interns - or 'Junior Research Associates' - as an integral part of our professional team. Many thanks to those who helped with the events in The Hague.

We are grateful to George Simonishvili for his role as Local Coordinator in the South Caucasus.

We are grateful to our accountants, Visser & Visser, for their professional support throughout the year and look forward to working with them in the future.

In 2024, we bid farewell to Jonathan van Varik, who contributed enormously to the work of the organisation, especially as Project Manager for the first 'South Caucasus Youth Peace Summer School' in 2023.



# A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN 2024



**January**

**Dennis Sammut visits Armenia for meetings with high government officials and civil society activists. Holds final meeting with Armenian JOLIG members**

**March**

**Dennis Sammut visits Azerbaijan for meetings with high government officials and civil society activists. Holds final meeting with Azerbaijani JOLIG members**

**First event 'The Hague Conversations on Climate Change, Peace and Security' held at The Hague Humanity Hub**

**April**

**LINKS Europe hosted a dialogue meeting on topic: "Climate Change, Peace and Security - COP29" in Bonn**



**June**

**Second event 'The Hague Conversations on Climate Change, Peace and Security' held at The Hague Humanity Hub**



**September**

**October**

**LINKS Europe prepares to launch its component in EU4Peace III**

**Launch of six online video diaries by Director, Dennis Sammut**

**February**



**Publication of report on the 'Landmine Free South Caucasus' consultation process**

**April**



**April**

**Maximiliaan van Lange visits Geneva, Switzerland, to participate in the 27th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN27)**

**May**

**Dennis Sammut visits Berlin for talks with the German government on Climate issues and to address a meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the situation in the South Caucasus**

**July**

**Bonn Contact Group finalises work on reports on Food Insecurity; Water Scarcity and Land Degradation**

**Presentation of final three reports of the Bonn Contact Group in Berlin, Germany**

**November**



**2025**

**Learn more on our website**

[www.links-europe.eu](http://www.links-europe.eu)

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