

**New Year's address by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz
for the new year 2022 in Berlin on
Friday, 31 December 2021**

My fellow citizens,

Today we bid farewell to a year that has brought with it a host of changes. One small change is that today I am the one speaking to you on New Year's Eve as your Federal Chancellor.

The smooth, amicable transition from the old to the new Federal Government was met with great approval around the world, and is a positive reflection of the strength of our society.

2021 has been a very challenging year for us all. We are all still feeling the burdens and far-reaching restrictions that the coronavirus pandemic has brought. And we will not soon forget the devastating floods in North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate.

As terrible as both of these events have been, there is also very good news in our response:

In Germany, we as a society have faced these challenges with great resolve.

After the floods, we all worked together to tackle the destruction they had wrought. Together, we helped out on the ground, cleaned up and started rebuilding. And we will keep working on this for a long time to come.

And in the fight against the pandemic, more than 60 million people in our country have now been vaccinated, a number that is growing by the day.

These days, some people complain that our society is "divided". I'd like to take this opportunity to make very clear that in fact, the opposite is true: our country is standing together.

What I see everywhere is tremendous solidarity, an incredible spirit of helping others, and people coming together in mutual support.

Today I would like to specifically thank all those who work day in and day out for our well-being. For our health and our security, both at home and abroad. In hospitals, nursing care, doctor's offices and vaccination centres, at police stations and in the Bundeswehr.

I thank you for everything that you do for our country, for each and every one of us!

Of course, in our daily interactions with each other we also experience differences of opinion, especially when it comes to coronavirus. This is often difficult.

But a strong society can withstand disagreements – as long as we listen to one another. And as long as we treat each other with respect.

We are all aware that the pandemic is not over yet, unfortunately. After the past 21 months, we have all been hoping very much for it to end. But tonight we will once again have to do without big New Year's Eve parties or grand fireworks.

We are making these sacrifices to stop the virus from spreading more and to avoid placing an additional strain on our hospitals. By going without these things, we are supporting the work of our doctors and other medical staff, who are also working tonight.

My fellow citizens, I would also like to express my personal thanks to you for your efforts to follow the rules.

One thing is clear: coronavirus will cast its shadow over the coming days and weeks. The virus has changed. A new variant is currently spreading very quickly. You have surely heard its name, omicron.

Many of you are wondering what this means for us and what will happen next. I promise you that we will respond to it swiftly and resolutely.

And I am very happy that we can rely on the advice of independent experts.

Today and in the coming weeks, there will be significant restrictions, some of them affecting private contacts. The new omicron variant means that the virus can now be transmitted even more easily.

Please take these restrictions very seriously. To protect yourselves and your family. To protect all of us.

We know that those who are not yet vaccinated are at particular risk of becoming infected and suffering from long and severe illness.

For this reason, I would like to urge you once more to get vaccinated.

I know that some people are sceptical. Some are worried that the vaccination could have negative effects.

But there are now almost four billion people around the world who have received the vaccine. Without major side effects. And countless vaccinated people have become parents of healthy babies.

The benefits of the vaccine are truly great. And the new virus variant should tip the balance further in favour of vaccination.

This is our way out of the pandemic.

What I ask of you is to please make an appointment in the next few days at a vaccination centre or doctor's office. Or take advantage of the walk-in opportunities to be vaccinated without an appointment. Please do not put it off for later.

And for all of you who are already vaccinated, I urge you to get your booster, your third vaccination, as soon as possible. This will give you better protection from severe illness if you become infected.

Speed is what matters now. We have to move faster than the virus!

We have managed more than 30 million vaccinations in Germany since mid-November. Probably more than in any other EU country.

This is good, but we want to do even better. We want to achieve another 30 million vaccinations by the end of January. This will protect us against omicron.

Together, let's do everything, truly everything we can to finally conquer coronavirus in 2022.

My fellow citizens,

Getting coronavirus under control is a major task for us in the new year.

Our other major task is to lay the groundwork for our country to keep moving forward.

The 2020s will be a decade of new beginnings.

We have set ambitious goals for this: within less than 25 years, we want Germany to become climate-neutral. To achieve this, we will move forward with the greatest transformation our economy has seen in more than a century.

In this period, we will achieve independence from coal, oil and gas. At the same time, we will generate at least twice as much electricity from wind, solar power and other renewable energy sources as we do today. This is a monumental task!

To face it head-on, we are initiating massive investments: in new power grids, in charging stations for electric vehicles, in wind turbines, in rail lines and much more. This will create new prosperity and good jobs.

We will achieve our climate targets as a modern industrialised nation. And our technologies will remain at the global forefront.

I am confident of this because we have everything we need: well-trained skilled workers, knowledgeable engineers, and active craft enterprises and businesses.

By working together, we will be able to master the major changes of our era. If we pull together as a community.

This requires respect, appreciation and good opportunities in life for everyone.

Decent pay is also a matter of respect. That is why in 2022, we will be taking a major step and increasing the legal minimum wage to 12 euros per hour.

And it is also important to me that everyone be able to live decently in retirement from the fruits of their own labour.

My fellow citizens,

Progress for a better world is a goal that no country can achieve alone. It can only be attained if the international community works together.

For a period of a year beginning tomorrow, Germany is assuming the presidency of the G7, the group of seven economically strong democratic countries.

We will use our presidency to make this group of countries a trailblazer for a climate-neutral economy and for a just world.

International cooperation is important. In a world of what will soon be ten billion people, we can only make our voice heard if it is joined by many others.

That is why we will continue to work for the success of the European Union. A strong and sovereign Europe is our goal. A Europe that lives by its shared values of peace, democracy and the rule of law.

Transatlantic cooperation is also essential for security in Europe. In this area, we are currently facing new challenges regarding Ukraine. The inviolability of borders is precious, and is not negotiable.

My fellow citizens,

We are at the beginning of the new decade. A new era is dawning. An era that will be successful if we actively shape it. Because we can make a difference if we remain determined and take our fate into our own hands.

For the New Year I wish you all the best, and above all good health. My great wish for 2022 is that we keep standing together!