

New Year's address by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz for the turn of the year 2022-23 held in Berlin on Saturday, 31 December 2022

My fellow citizens,

Tonight is the end of a difficult year.

No round-up of the year can leave out the images of 24 February, when, in the light of dawn, the first Russian missiles struck Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa and other Ukrainian cities.

Putin is conducting an imperialist war of aggression, at the heart of Europe.

This watershed moment is also a tough test for us and our country.

Many are worried about the war. We sympathise with the Ukrainian people who, even on days like today, have no peace from the Russian bombs and missiles.

And we are all feeling the effects of the war in our everyday lives – when shopping in the supermarket, at the petrol station, or paying our electricity or gas bills.

And yet, the history of 2022 is not purely one of war, suffering and worry.

- After all, Putin did not manage, as he had planned, to overrun Ukraine in a matter of days. On the contrary, the Ukrainians are bravely defending their homeland – thanks in part to our help. And we will continue to support Ukraine.
- The European Union and NATO are not split, as they have been in various crises of the past. They stand more united than ever.
- And we in Germany did not bow down when Russia turned off the gas this summer. Because we refuse to be blackmailed.

My fellow citizens, for me, that too is the really remarkable history of 2022.

It is one of cohesion and strength – and, yes, one of confidence as well.

It is a history that all of you have helped to write – all across our country.

In Wilhelmshaven on the North Sea, for example.

Two weeks ago, the Höegh Esperanza anchored there – a floating terminal that will in future supply us with liquefied gas.

It took our engineers and skilled workers less than 200 days to build the new terminal and the pipelines needed for it.

Additional liquefied-gas terminals will begin operations in the coming weeks and months – in Lubmin, in Stade, in Brunsbüttel.

With these efforts, we are making our country and Europe independent of Russian gas for the long term.

And we are getting ourselves through this winter – also thanks, incidentally, to well-stocked gas storage facilities and to the joint effort we have made to save energy over recent months.

That will remain important in the months ahead. Let me already express my sincere thanks for that!

The history of 2022 tells of a country where we step up to help others; of 29 million volunteers working up and down the country; of the overwhelming sympathy and solicitude with which so many of you have greeted the people fleeing Ukraine.

In Cologne, I met women and men looking after Ukrainian war refugees. The new arrivals at the time included an entire women's football team, some of them accompanied by their children. Those women had had to leave not only their belongings behind in Ukraine. They had been parted from their husbands, boyfriends, fathers and brothers. Offering help in such an emergency is what makes us who we are. It makes our country a more humane country.

The history of our country at this watershed moment is also being written by those who work for our security – in the police, for instance, or the Bundeswehr, or our fire and rescue services.

At a military training area in Bergen in the Lüneburg Heath, I saw how conscientiously our troops train to defend our country and our friends and allies from all threats. They deserve the greatest respect for that – and our gratitude.

In 2022, I experienced Germany as a country that innovates.

- In Schwarzheide, for example, in Lusatia. Young skilled workers and technicians there enthusiastically showed me how they are going to recycle old batteries for us to use in electric cars.
- Or take the little town of Allendorf in North Hesse. Our engineers there are developing modern, highly efficient air-source heat pumps. Here in Germany – for a clean future for the generations to come.
- I am also thinking of all those who then assemble and install such machines. In Munich, I met a number of them – tradespeople, electricians, chimney sweeps and installation technicians.

They said to me, “We are the problem solvers when it comes to climate action and the energy transition.”

And that’s true. They too, with their work, are ensuring that our country has a bright future.

My fellow citizens,

There are places like Munich and Allendorf, like Cologne and Schwarzheide, Bergen and Wilhelmshaven all over our country.

Places where people work hard and work meticulously. Where everyone does their bit. And where people hold together and are there for one another – in clubs and grassroots initiatives, in volunteer fire brigades, in hospitals and care homes, in schools and nurseries, at village and town fêtes.

That is Germany at the start of this new year!

A strong country. A country working with élan and alacrity on a bright, secure future. A country that lends a hand, particular when times are hard. A country where we leave nobody behind – whether in our towns or rural areas, whether they are old or young, well-to-do or less well off, whether they were born here or came here later in life.

So that everyone in Germany can cope with the price rises, we have put together big relief packages in the past year.

Tomorrow, on New Year's Day, more changes will take effect:

- The housing benefit helping all those who work for low incomes or are living on small pensions.

- A significantly higher child benefit and higher child supplement, to give our families' finances a boost.

- Tax breaks – totalling EUR 19 billion – for the many who work and strive every day here in our country.

- And finally, we are capping the cost of electricity, gas and district heat.

My fellow citizens,

Our cohesion is our greatest asset.

I therefore have one wish for us at the beginning of this New Year:

Let's keep to the path that we set out on this past year. Let's follow it with courage.

But above all, let's continue to hold together in the coming year – between Munich and Wilhelmshaven, between Schwarzheide in Lusatia and Cologne in the Rhineland.

Wherever you are seeing out the old year tonight, and perhaps raising a glass to the new with your family, your friends –

I wish with all my heart that this New Year will be a good one for you!
