



**Video message by
Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
on the demonstrations for liberal democracy and against
right-wing extremism
on 17 February 2024**

Today once more, tens of thousands of people, both old and young, entire families will be out and about, will gather peacefully and stand together for something that unites us all: we want to live together in freedom and in respect for one another.

Fellow Germans, I am impressed! Whether in Rostock or Munich, in Apolda or Zweibrücken, in big cities and small towns – the democratic centre of our society is wide awake. Our democracy is vibrant. The vast majority in the country is united against hatred, violence and extremism. What is more, this vast majority is standing up to be counted.

What I am hearing now from many of you who are standing up for democracy is something that I, too, can sense: this democratic centre has achieved something with the demonstrations. It has banished indifference. It has given us courage. We can breathe more easily again. We are feeling the strength that is rooted in community. I am proud of our country, proud of its people.

Those out on our streets do not all have the same political background. They are from all walks of life and do not want to be drawn into one political camp. They know that this is not about right or left now. It is about the very foundation of our co-existence. It is about drawing a line between democrats and those who despise our democracy and are attacking it. It is about Germany remaining a cosmopolitan, democratic country.

I hear a call going out to all of us, a call echoing far beyond the demonstrations themselves: let's together stand up to the enemies of democracy. Let's prevent extremists calling the shots and ridiculing the institutions of our democracy.

Yes, democracy needs controversy – also between parties. Taking different paths but remaining united when it comes to what we share –

democracy – that is what the people out in the streets expect. The economy, the workplace, culture, civil society, clubs and associations: this call goes out to all. We need democrats to close ranks. Not just today, but 365 days a year.

Let us stand together for a free, peaceful and friendly Germany.