



**Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
in a video message for the 21. Maccabiah
on 11 July 2022
in Israel**

Athletes, the time has finally come: following a one-year delay due to the pandemic, the 21st Maccabi Games – the world’s largest Jewish sports event – are about to begin. This is a festive, a special and, above all, a joyful event! More than 11,000 athletes from 80 countries will be competing in 47 disciplines. As athletes, all of you will retain happy memories of the coming weeks, the competitions with athletes from around the world, your successes, but in particular the many special moments and encounters. The coming weeks will help you to develop in sporting terms, but especially on a personal level. They will help you to grow. With your huge sporting event, with this “Maccabiah”, you are celebrating sport and showing what it can do: it can bring people from around the world together in a joyful and peaceful atmosphere. For the Maccabi Games celebrate understanding among peoples.

I wish you – Team Germany – every success at the 2022 Games. My fingers are crossed for each and every one of you, and I hope that as a team you will manage to break your medal record of 2017. You have worked hard for it. It is particularly gratifying that the German team will be represented at these Games with almost 100 junior athletes in around 20 disciplines. It is also a sign of hope which demonstrates there is a vibrant Maccabi movement in Germany.

For me, even from a distance these international games are a very special event. Almost 125 years ago, in 1898, the first Jewish sports club was founded in Berlin. In a show of fighting spirit, it was named after Bar Kokhba, the leader of the Jewish uprising against the Romans. Makkabi Germany was subsequently founded in 1903. Jewish athletes all over the world followed this example and established their own sports clubs. To this very day, this is about more: Maccabi stands for the joy and sense of community in sport. However, it always also meant refuge and protection – from exclusion, from antisemitism. In our country’s

darkest hour, Jewish men and women were no longer able to find protection in Germany. They were persecuted, tormented and killed – by Germans. It is therefore a great source of joy that today there are Jewish sports clubs in all parts of Germany, that Makkabi Germany is a thriving association and that the Maccabi Games took place for the first time in Berlin seven years ago in 2015, 70 years after the Shoah. I am sure that many of you still remember this uplifting, wonderful Jewish sports festival in the heart of Germany.

Team Germany: that is exactly what I wish you again this year at the Maccabi Games in Israel – success and lots of fun. Give your all – we are right behind you!

Shabbat Shalom and above all: Maccabi Chai!