

What to expect from 2022; Brexit, a year on; Desmond Tutu's legacy

We look forward and back in this, our final edition of 2021. From page 19 onwards, our longstanding foreign affairs commentator Simon Tisdall offers his perspective on what to expect in 2022, a year that appears fraught with problems on almost every front. There's also consideration of prospects for the environment, technology and space exploration.

Then, from page 33, you'll find cultural reflections on the year drawing to a close, with agency photographers of the year, memories of those we lost, and critics' picks of the best film, music and more.

2022: the year ahead Page 19 →

2019: the year in review Page 33 →

A year ago, Britain formally exited the European Union in one of the most traumatic and divisive political acts in the nation's history. For our big story this week, the Observer's political and economics experts consider the benefits - or otherwise - of "taking back control".

The big story Page 10 →

The passing of the anti-apartheid icon Desmond Tutu, at the age of 90, sparked a week of mourning in South Africa and heartfelt tributes from around the world. From Cape Town, Jason Burke reflects on the legacy of the man who coined the term "rainbow nation", and who bore a moral authority equalled by few others.

Spotlight Page 18 →

As data trickles in, scientists, epidemiologists and governments have been grappling with how to respond to the fast-spreading Omicron Covid variant. Robin McKie looks at what we know so far.

Spotlight Page 17 →



4-14 GLOBAL REPORT
Headlines from the last seven days

10 **The big story** Brexit, one year on: how's it going?

15-18 SPOTLIGHT
In-depth reporting and analysis

15 **Ireland** Sinn Féin on the pathway to power

17 **Covid-19** Whither Omicron

18 **South Africa** Tutu's legacy

19-32 2022 IN FOCUS
Looking ahead to a year of daunting challenges

20 Another year of living dangerously

By Simon Tisdall

27 Guardian supporters' new year predictions

28 **Environment** Covid will hit nature's 'super year'

By Patrick Greenfield

30 **Technology** A false dawn for VR again?

By James Ball

32 **Science** Fly me to the moon - and after that, Mars

By Richard Luscombe

33-55 2021 IN REVIEW
Cultural highlights from the past 12 months

34 Agency photographers of the year

38 Those we lost, recalled by friends and family

44 Best films and music

53 TV favourites from the Guardian Weekly team

54 Best of the rest: stage, art, comedy and more

57-61 OPINION

57 **Larry Elliott**

We need a Covid New Deal

59 **Kirsten Sehnbruch**

Can Boric reunite Chile?

60 **Emma Graham-Harrison**

Let's not forget the true face of the Taliban

62-63 DIVERSIONS
Chess and crosswords

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On the cover

From continent to continent, the climate, pandemic and tensions between states means the year ahead is likely to be as tumultuous as the 12 months about to end. As Simon Tisdall writes: "All in all, for most people on Earth - and a handful in space - 2022 will be another year of living dangerously."

Illustration: Guardian Design