For immediate release

Ending child marriage is crucial for Africa’s development
Angélique Kidjo, West African singer and songwriter and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

NIAMEY (Niger), 7th July 2019 – Angélique Kidjo, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador delivers a statement in a video broadcasted on the occasion of the side-event of the African Union Summit organized by the First Lady of the Republic of Niger, Dr. Lalla Malika Issoufou, and the Government of Niger, with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and United Nations partners to galvanize support to eliminate child marriage and promote the girl’s education in the region.

“We need to change mentalities, we need to talk to families, we need our Governments involved to preserve and protect the girl’s future…”

“How can we sit and say that we do not have any mechanisms in place to prevent the girls from being married?”

“The number of girls getting married, as we speak, is growing up, after all the work we’ve done. I call on every stakeholder that works with children and adolescents to put our resources together to preserve the girls, to protect them and to give them a future…”

“Our governments need to come on board and talk to us and together, we can find long-lasting solutions for a girl to go to school, to decide her own path, to decide her own future and to decide when she wants to have a child and who to marry.”

Angélique Kidjo, the dynamic West African singer and songwriter, was appointed a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador on 25 July 2002. Ms. Kidjo is a passionate advocate for girls’ education and has made that a focus of her UNICEF partnership.

As Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Kidjo travels widely to advocate for UNICEF-supported programmes. She is an energetic campaigner for children and young people, often speaking out on issues that affect them and making time to visit UNICEF programmes while on her concert tours.

Ms. Kidjo has participated in a range of activities on behalf of UNICEF, including attending high level meetings, speaking and performing at public events and granting media interviews. Her public service announcements on the need to educate all children, to eradicate polio and to increase support for children affected by HIV/AIDS have helped bring greater attention to these issues.

Angélique Kidjo was born in Benin and began her career at age six by performing in her mother's theatre troupe. In 1983, due to Benin’s unstable political climate, she moved to Paris where she studied jazz. Her music is heavily influenced by West African rhythms and incorporates a range of other musical traditions, such as funk, rumba, salsa, jazz, souk and makossa. She is multilingual, speaking and singing in English, French, Yoruba and Fon, the native language of Benin.

Ms. Kidjo has won a number of music awards including the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World Music for her album Djin Djin.

Check out here Angélique Kidjo’s video statement: https://uni.cf/2YFDhMW

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UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children in Niger, visit www.unicef.org/niger.

For more information, please contact:
Lalaina Fatratra Andriamasinoro, Chief of Communication, +227 80 06 60 18, Ifandriamasinoro@unicef.org, UNICEF Niger