UNICEF welcomes European Union’s renewed commitment to help end child marriage

BRUSSELS, 27 May 2015 — UNICEF welcomed today the European Commission’s renewed pledge to work towards ending child marriage. The announcement came after the European Commission confirmed in a statement at the European Parliament that protecting children against traditional harmful practices, among them child, early and forced marriage, is a policy and programming priority for the EU.

UNICEF estimates that over 700 million women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. More than 1 in 3 of them entered into union before the age of 15.

Child marriage among girls is most common in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Niger has the highest overall prevalence of child marriage in the world while Bangladesh has the highest rate of marriage involving girls under age 15. South Asia is home to almost half (42 per cent) of all child brides worldwide. India alone accounts for one third of the global total.

Research shows that the longer a girl stays in school the less likely she is to get married at a young age. The European Union supports UNICEF’s programmes to ensure that girls go to school, stay in school and have access to quality education while in school.

The EU also supports UNICEF’s efforts to end gender-based violence and protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse.

UNICEF child protection and education programmes currently benefit from EU support in 27 countries.

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**About UNICEF**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

For more information about the UNICEF – EU partnership visit: [http://www.unicef.org/eu/](http://www.unicef.org/eu/)

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