



Internationally acclaimed singer dedicates song to volunteers worldwide as UN General Assembly prepares for landmark volunteerism discussion.

Internationally acclaimed singer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Angélique Kidjo, joined forces with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme this week, ahead of a 5 December UN General Assembly Session on volunteerism. UNV's message to Member States is clear - millions of volunteers are changing lives for the better every day and with better recognition and support much more can be done.

When the internationally acclaimed singer, Angélique Kidjo, is not wowing audiences with her music she is often volunteering to help UNICEF advocate for children. As a Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Kidjo travels to refugee camps and far-flung villages in some of the world's poorest countries. On a recent trip she met a child soldier and a victim of rape and shared her music with them. "The moment I saw them smile I had won the battle against the solitary confinement they had put themselves in because of their trauma," she said. "Volunteering matters to me because there are many things all of us can do every day to help others."

Ms. Kidjo is among the millions who volunteer worldwide every year. From the community health volunteer whose medical know-how reaches the remotest places, to the rescue-trained volunteer who joins government efforts to bring relief when disaster strikes, volunteers are changing lives every day, says UNV Executive Coordinator, Flavia Pansieri. In fact, a recent study of 36 countries estimated that 140 million people engage in volunteer work annually, which taken together, would comprise the 9th largest country in the world.

This week Ms. Kidjo dedicated her song 'Agolo' to volunteers everywhere ahead of a landmark UN General Assembly session, which will be the culmination of the tenth-anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. Hopes are high that the 5 December Session will result in better recognition and support for volunteering.

“If volunteering were better recognized and supported, it would have the power to change many more lives, and even help the world reduce poverty, environmental degradation and other major challenges of our times,” Ms. Pansieri said. “This is our message to the UN Member States.”

Ahead of the Session UNV is calling on volunteers, especially UN Volunteers and Online volunteers, to show the world why volunteering matters by sending a photo that demonstrates the power of volunteer action where they are serving. UNV is active in 130 countries every year, and for this campaign aims to collect one photo from every country in the world. The global photo collection will be online and a mosaic of photos collected will be revealed on 7 December.

To further strengthen the case for volunteering, UNV will also release the first-ever State of the World’s Volunteerism Report on 5 December – International Volunteer Day.

Through her work with UNICEF, Ms. Kidjo says her respect for UN Volunteers and community volunteers has grown immensely because they inspire lasting change. “People might not remember your name as a volunteer, but they will remember how you have helped them to take the lead in their own life.”

You can join the global effort to show why volunteering matters in the lead-up to International Volunteer Day by sending photos from where you are. Simply visit: <http://volunteeringmatters.unv.org> and follow as the world lights up with examples of volunteer action from every country in the world.

For more information, please contact: elisabeth.hiller@unvolunteers.org "> elisabeth.hiller@unvolunteers.org

About UNV:

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development, and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally,

encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers. UNV directly mobilizes more than 7,700 UN Volunteers every year nationally and internationally, with 80 per cent coming from developing countries, and more than 30 per cent volunteering within their own countries.