



The National AIDS Commission (NAS) on December, 2011 commemorated the World AIDS Day with the global Theme “Getting to Zero NEW HIV infection by 2015. BELIEVE IT! DO IT!”. As part of his global message on the commemoration of World AIDS Day. The United Nations Secretary- General Ban Kin Moon said that “as the world is heading into the fourth decade of the epidemic, there is hope that an end into the epidemic will be achieved. This hope of realizing the global vision of a zero new HIV infection, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related death is strengthened by the progress made so far in scaling down on the growth of the epidemic”.

According to the under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Michel Sidibe, he said never before in the history of AIDS have we reached a moment where we are able to stand up and say with conviction the end of AIDS is in sight. According to Mr. Sidebe, it has been a year of achievement of collective action, of resilience and of courage, despite the economic downturn that has stretched the AIDS response to it limits, millions of lives have been saved, as HIV treatment and prevention efforts continue to show results.

Speaking on the commemoration of World AIDS Day (WAD) the Director of the National AIDS Commission (NAC) Dr. Brima Kargbo reminded Sierra Leoneans that the president in 2010 launched the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan. The vision is to have zero new infections, zero AIDS related death and zero discrimination. According to the NAC Director, the strategic plan has very ambitious targets as a means of achieving Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support.



***The Director, Dr. Brima Kargbo, giving his speech***

He however maintained that the country's prevalence still stands at 1.5% with an estimated 48,000 people living with the virus. Approximately 45,000 people are newly infected every year. Therefore it is paramount that these new infections be stopped. To meet the challenges, it required the increase commitment and a sustainable and collective effort among all stakeholders including community and religious leaders, the media and people living with the virus. The Director of NAC highlighted how Sierra Leone is trying to address the soaring new infections through the Essential Policy Actions for HIV Prevention in Sierra Leone by ensuring that human rights are promoted, protected and respected that will eliminate discrimination and combat stigma. Building and maintain effective leadership from all sections of society including affected people, government and other stakeholders. Involve positive livings in the design, implementation and evaluation of prevention strategies and addressing the distinct prevention needs. He assured Sierra Leoneans that the new commission is committed in meeting the country's defined targets by 2015. Realizing this is essential to achieve the MDGs Goal

Speaking on behalf of the Business Coalition against AIDS Sierra Leone (BCAASL) the Chairperson of BCAASL, Mrs. Alice Onomake maintained that every year the commemoration continues to gather momentum, and a multitude of stake holders are motivated around common

goals to heighten awareness, consolidate comprehensive knowledge on HIV and AIDS and promote the existing available services countrywide. She said that, the Business Coalition Against AIDS in Sierra Leone (BCAASL) was established in 2008 and is the country's leading independent national alliance of small, medium-sized and large business committed to preventing the spread of HIV in the corporate work place context and mitigating the impact of AIDS on the private workforce and the various communities they reside. The Chairperson maintained that as an organization they speak with one voice for improved access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support to employers, employees and their dependants and note with appreciation the stability in the National HIV Prevalence which is a positive pointer to getting to the target of Zero –New Infection zero discrimination and zero related HIV deaths by 2015.

Representing the United Nations Secretary General and the entire UN Family in Sierra Leone the World Health Organization (WHO) Representative Dr. Aliemu called on the government and key partners to effectively collaborate and synergized their efforts in meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) by 2015. He admonished the government through the National Aids Commission (NAC) to do more in warding-off the scourge of the epidemic and urged all concern to act on the investment framework put forward by UNAIDS. Statements were made by other stakeholders namely The First lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone, The Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the United State Ambassador to Sierra Leone and Network of HIV Positives.



Representing His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma is the Hon. Minister of Works, Housing and infrastructure Alhaji P. Koroma. In his keynote address, He said, 2011 is a year set aside by government for implementation and in the context of HIV/AIDS, he is pleased to say the secretariat which is now a commission has put together the framework to address the issue of HIV/AIDS. He said they as government with the support of the secretariat

has almost completed the National HIV prevention and the behavior change communication strategy for 2011 to 2015. All of these would have taken place, he believed in Sierra Leone by 2015, then, we would have been able to meet our goal of Zero new infections of all Sierra Leoneans. He talked about the current trend of the epidemic which is still in the verge of stabilizing which has acclaimed Sierra Leone an award on the MDGs 6 for HIV/AIDS. He highlighted the theme for this year in Sierra Leone "Getting to new HIV infection through virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV" which is synonymous to the Global Theme. Through government efforts and partners, there is a reduction of HIV prevalence or spread among pregnant women from 3.5% to 3.2% in 2010 and the number of positive children from 9% in 2009 to 5% in 2011. He urged all Sierra Leoneans to effectively collaborate government strides towards zero new infection, zero HIV/AIDS related deaths and zero stigma and discrimination by 2015. To climax this event, on behalf of the President and government, declared HIV/AIDS as an integral part of the public health delivery system in the entire country. At the end of his statement, he thanked the UN family, Multilateral and bilateral organizations and the National AIDS Secretariat, as they continue to lend their hands in this engagement.