H.E. President Koroma launching the NSP 2011-2015 on World AIDS Day

To commemorate World AIDS day in Sierra Leone and in the continued fight against the epidemic, His Excellency, President Ernest Bai Koroma, Chairman National AIDS Council officially launched the National Strategic Plan 2011 -2015 at a ceremony held at the Mattia Conference Center, Youyi Building in Freetown, on December 1, 2010.

The President expressed thanks and appreciation to Staff and Management of the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat and the people of Sierra Leone for the concerted effort and commitment in the fight against the epidemic. He further informed the audience that Sierra Leone received an award for the outstanding national leadership, commitments and progress towards achievements of MDG goal 6 - combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, on the 19 September at the grand ball room of the Waldof Astoria, United States of America. He added that the
accolade belongs to all who in diverse ways are collaborating towards the ongoing National campaign.

He also commended international donor partners without whose support the Country could not have made remarkable progress and opined that despite the achievements made so far in mitigating the HIV and AIDS prevalence, yet lunching of the five –year strategic plan is another clarion call for more invigorative efforts by all and sundry to ensure that Sierra Leone becomes free from HIV and AIDS and assured of government's continued support.

Director, National HIV/AIDS Secretariat, Dr. Brima Kargbo, expressed appreciation to the President and the United Nation family whose presence at the ceremony was an indication of

support to the fight against the disease in addition to sustaining People living with HIV in the Country.

Dr. Brima Kargbo disclosed the drastic reduction in the prevalence rate of the virus among the Population in the Country and enlightened that despite such a feat, yet there are numerous challenges that call for the support of all.

Advocacy Officer, of the Network of People Living with HIV, Mr. Arnold Macauley, also acclaimed Government and donor partners for their support towards them and called on the people of Sierra Leone to celebrate this year's event with pride as it coincides with the international award the Country received for achievement made in the fight against the spread of the epidemic.

Arnold Macauley further appealed to the President to allocate land for the construction of the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat where testing, counselling and other activities can be undertaken affirming that if this is achieved, it would be another hallmark for best practices in addition to the enforcement of laws against marginalization and stigmatization of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

America Ambassador in Sierra Leone, Michael Owen, on behalf of the Government and people of the United States of America, lauded the Government and people of Sierra Leone for the remarkable successes made in the fight against the disease and guaranteed future assistance.

UNFPA Country Representative, Mrs. Ratizia Ndlovu, on behalf of the Special Representative of the United Nation Secretary General, called on Sierra Leoneans to commemorate and applaud the effort of Dr. Brima Kargbo and team for the low prevalence rate and described him as a dedicated and committed leader who has steered the mantle of leadership at the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat.

Chairperson of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on HIV/AIDS, Hon. Marie Conteh-Jalloh, assured the commitment of Parliament to debate and enacts laws related to gender and human rights.

Minister of Mineral Resources and political Affairs, Hon. Alpha Kanu, who chaired the ceremony, admonished Sierra Leoneans to work by choosing the good path of life in line with the theme for this year's world AIDS Day, 'Universal Access and Human Rights'.