

President Paul Kagame has been honored by the International Cycling Union (UCI) for his role in bringing the World Road Championships to Africa for the first time in the event's 103-year history.

The award, presented Saturday at a gala dinner at Kigali Convention Center, included a medal and a champion's jersey, normally given to race winners. The ceremony was attended by UCI President David Lappartient and Prince Albert II of Monaco.

"Kigali did not only meet our expectations but went far beyond," Lappartient said. "The global cycling family felt Rwanda's love throughout this week. President Kagame, we thank you. It is an honor to have you as a strong supporter of cycling and of this world championship."

Kagame, who has made sports a key part of youth development in Rwanda, said he was humbled by the recognition.

"I did not race, but I won," he said. "I want to thank those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Your efforts were not in vain."

He highlighted the role of sport in uniting people. "The sounds, the fans and the excitement demonstrated the power of sport to bring people together. Rwanda is proud to have played a part in this historic moment. Please always consider Rwanda your home," he said.

The 2025 UCI Road World Championships conclude Sunday with the elite men's road race over 267.5 kilometers. The eight-day event has drawn thousands of fans and showcased Rwanda's capacity to host major international sporting events.

Kagame linked the tournament to Africa's youth demographics, citing UNDP data showing that 60% of the continent's population is under 20, and more than 400 million are between 15 and 35. Africa's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050.

"Investing in sport in Africa is investing in what young people need most—opportunities and training," he said.

The gala featured performances by Rwanda's national troupe, Urukerereza, with traditional songs, dances, and drumming, adding a cultural showcase to the international celebration.

Lapartient said Rwanda had exceeded expectations in hosting the event. "The city of Kigali went above and beyond. We will leave Rwanda with memories that will never be forgotten, and we hope the president and the country will keep these experiences with them," he said.