Rwanda’s Office of the Ombudsman and Gabon’s Commission for the Fight Against Corruption (CNLCEI) met on November 26, 2024, to explore a partnership aimed at tackling cross-border corruption.

The meeting, which included officials from Rwanda’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focused on improving both countries’ efforts to fight corruption.

Nirere Madeleine, the Chief Ombudsman highlighted Rwanda’s use of technology in anti-corruption efforts. “In Rwanda, we’ve moved to an online system, where people can easily update their asset declarations unlike other places where asset declarations are still done on paper.”

Nirere noted the challenges in Gabon, where citizens must travel long distances to get documents like criminal background certificates.

Despite these challenges, Rwanda learned from Gabon’s approach. Nirere mentioned that Gabon has strong measures in place to protect whistleblowers, especially those working with the media. “We’ve shared our experience in training journalists to report on corruption,” she added.

Gabon’s delegation proposed offering rewards to encourage citizens to report corruption. However, Nirere emphasized that accountability for those accused of corruption is key. “We must ensure that information provided is legally treated as evidence,” she said.

The Gabonese delegation invited Rwanda to join the Regional Anti-Corruption Network (RINAC) for Central Africa.

Nestor Mbou, President of CNLCEI, expressed the need for both countries to collaborate more closely. “We can work together to create stronger mechanisms to fight corruption and support development,” he said.

Both countries discussed how they could share information to track corruption suspects and recover stolen assets. This cooperation would also help improve their global rankings in the fight against corruption. Rwanda currently ranks 49th globally and 1st in East Africa.

Rwanda and Gabon already have strong diplomatic ties. In October 2023, Rwandan

President Paul Kagame met with Gabon’s transitional president to discuss areas of cooperation. Both nations are committed to continuing discussions and strengthening their partnership to fight corruption.