Rwanda has made impressive strides in the fight against corruption, recording its highest-ever score on the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The country moved up six places globally, reinforcing its position as the least corrupt country in East Africa and one of the top performers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The 2024 CPI, released on Tuesday, February 11, by Transparency International, ranked Rwanda 49th globally, a drop from 43rd in 2023. However, the country's 57% score represents a significant improvement from the 53% it scored the previous year. This marks Rwanda's highest score to date, despite the challenges the region faces in combating corruption.

Regionally, Rwanda continues to lead the fight against corruption in East Africa, holding the top position for the third consecutive year. Behind Rwanda in the region are Tanzania (82nd globally, scoring 41%), Kenya (121st globally, scoring 32%), Uganda (140th globally, scoring 26%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (163rd globally, scoring 20%), and Burundi (165th globally, scoring 17%).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda ranks third, alongside Botswana, both of whom scored 57%. Seychelles remains the top performer in the region with a score of 72%, up from 71% in 2023. Cabo Verde follows closely with a score of 62%, though it saw a slight drop from the 64% it achieved in 2023.

Globally, Denmark remains the least corrupt country with a near-perfect score of 90%, followed by Finland at 88%. Transparency International's CPI ranks 180 countries and territories based on the perceived levels of public sector corruption, using a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

Despite Rwanda's improvement, the index highlights a concerning trend in the region, where corruption levels remain high compared to other parts of the world. The 2024 CPI's theme, "Corruption and the Climate Crisis," stresses how corruption exacerbates the climate crisis by diverting critical funds that could be used for climate change mitigation and adaptation, further undermining vulnerable communities.

Marie Immaculée Ingabire, Chairperson of Transparency International Rwanda (TI-Rwanda), attributed the improvement to the government's unwavering commitment to combating corruption. "Rwanda's significant improvement in the CPI reflects the

government’s steadfast commitment to fighting corruption. Our political will and zero-tolerance approach continue to drive positive change,” she said.

Ingabire also acknowledged the challenges that remain. “While we celebrate this achievement, as highlighted by the Rwanda Bribery Index, more work is needed to address corruption in specific areas. To sustain and build on this progress, collaboration across all sectors is essential.”

Apollinaire Mupiganyi, TI-Rwanda’s Executive Director, emphasized the broader impact of corruption. “Corruption isn’t just a governance issue. It fuels illicit financial flows, shrinks civic space, and undermines efforts to address critical global crises, such as climate change,” Mupiganyi stated. “The fight against corruption is about ensuring justice, economic stability, and a sustainable future for all. It is imperative that governments, civil society, and international institutions unite to dismantle corruption and protect the integrity of our societies.”

Rwanda’s Chief Ombudsman, Madeleine Nirere, commended the country’s progress but highlighted that more effort is needed to achieve Rwanda’s long-term goal of becoming the least corrupt country by 2050. “This ranking is commendable, but there’s still much work to be done. Rwanda aspires to be the least corrupt nation by 2050, so we must intensify our efforts to achieve this goal,” Nirere said.

The CPI also underscores the urgent need to address corruption within climate-related projects. According to Transparency International, countries most vulnerable to climate change, which typically score below 50 on the index, are at risk of having crucial climate funds embezzled or misused. This can significantly delay or undermine vital projects aimed at protecting populations most at risk from climate change.

Despite the challenges that remain, Rwanda’s progress on the CPI reflects a nation determined to build a transparent and accountable government. The government has set a goal to completely eradicate corruption by 2050, demonstrating that with continued effort, positive change is possible.