Press Statement: Maldives CPI 2025 Score Signals Ongoing Governance and Accountability Challenges

10 February 2026

Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and Maldives' score

Transparency International today released the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), awarding the Maldives a score of 39. Over the past five years, the country's CPI scores have remained consistently low, ranging between 38 and 43, indicating limited progress in addressing systemic corruption.

The CPI 2025 scored and ranked 182 countries and territories by their perceived level of public sector corruption, drawing on surveys and expert assessments. The index uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. The Maldives, with a score of 39, is ranked 91 out of 182 countries in the CPI 2025.

The Maldives' 2025 score was drawn from the composite assessment of three international sources: Global Insight Country Risk Ratings, Varieties of Democracy Project, and World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA).

The Maldives' CPI score remains concerning, reflecting systemic vulnerabilities to corruption that undermine public trust, weaken institutions, and limit citizens' access to justice and essential services. With the release of the score, it is important to reflect on recent developments in the area of governance, legislative changes, and institutional practices that creates systemic vulnerabilities to corruption.
Key areas of concern include:

Concentration of Power and Risk of State Capture

Recent constitutional and legislative changes have significantly centralized authority within the executive, heightening the risk of state capture. In November 2024, rushed amendments to the Constitution have weakened democratic checks and balances and constrained citizen participation in decision-making. Parallel changes affecting the judiciary, including amendments to the Judicature Act and the suspension of Supreme Court justices, have further undermined the independence of the courts, creating avenues for executive influence over judicial processes.

At the same time, amendments to decentralization-related laws have transferred key administrative and decision-making powers from local councils to central authorities, further eroding local autonomy, limiting community oversight, and weakening participatory governance.

Similarly, changes to the Anti-Corruption Commission Act and the Elections Commission Act allow the President to appoint the President and Vice President of both commissions, politicizing key oversight bodies and undermining institutional impartiality. Reduced independence of oversight institutions, including those responsible for anti-corruption and elections, raises the risk of state capture, diminishes transparency and erodes public trust in the government and key state institutions.

Shrinking Civic Space and Threats to Media Freedom

With the passing of the Maldives Media and Broadcasting Regulation Act in September 2025, restrictions on civic space and media have intensified, threatening media independence and freedom of speech. The Act replaced the previously established Maldives Broadcasting Commission with a new Maldives Media and Broadcasting Commission comprising 7 members, 3 of whom are diretly appointed by the President of Maldives. This undermines the independence and impartiality of the regulatory body, creating avenues for political influence over media oversight. By centralizing authority and limiting the autonomy of media institutions, the law further erodes democratic governance and constrains the space for accountability, transparency, and meaningful citizen participation.

Additionally, fast tracked processes such as the public referendum vote that took place to decide the jurisdictional composition of Addu City Council, also demonstrated a lack of meaningful public consultation. These measures threaten transparency, reduce citizen engagement, and undermine accountability mechanisms crucial for limiting corruption.

Environmental and Economic Oversight

Weak governance has affected both environmental regulation and economic progress, creating substantial risks of potential corruption. In August 2025, the Governing Board of Environmental Protection Agency was dissolved and restructured as the Environmental Regulatory Authority and placed directly under the merged Ministry of Tourism and Environment. The 6th Amendment to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulation poses further threats to the EIA mechanism by allowing the Cabinet to fast-track projects deemed of “special importance,” bypassing the EIA procceses and undermining established safeguards designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.

Additionally, governance gaps in management of State-Owned Enterprises and large-scale development projects face similar vulnerabilities. Weak oversight, opaque procurement and recruitment practices, and insufficient institutional checks foster mismanagement of resources, distort resource allocation, and open avenues for corrupt practices.

Anti-Corruption, Accountability, and Culture of Impunity

Persistent challenges in enforcing anti-corruption measures and ensuring accountability continue to undermine democratic governance in the Maldives. Weak oversight, limited transparency, and politically influenced decision-making create an environment where misconduct can go unchecked, and public officials may act with impunity.

Failure to strengthen anti-corruption related legislative frameworks, low conviction rate for perpetrators of corruption and ineffective implementation of legal protections, such as those for whistleblowers, further discourages reporting of corruption and abuse of power.

Transparency Maldives calls on the government to:

- Ensure the independence and impartiality of key institutions, including oversight bodies, the judiciary, and local governance structures, with appointments based on merit and free from political influence.

- Ensure that the principles of decentralization enshrined in the Constitution are upheld to empower local councils and strengthen democratic governance.

- Protect civic space, media freedom, access to information and other fundamental freedoms to allow citizens to engage meaningfully in governance and hold public institutions accountable.

- Strengthen transparency and accountability across all public institutions and state-owned enterprises to reduce corruption risks، prevent misuse of resources and culture of impunity.

- Reinforce anti-corruption mechanisms, including robust oversight, effective enforcement of asset declaration and recovery frameworks, and protections for whistleblowers.

- Promote inclusive citizen participation in legislative, policy, and development processes, ensuring that governance is responsive, participatory, and aligned with principles of decentralization.

- Align national governance practices with international norms and commitments, including UNCAC (United Nations Convention against Corruption) and OGP (Open Government Partnership) standards, to minimize corruption vulnerabilities and safeguard public resources.

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