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A decorative graphic featuring a central globe surrounded by various icons representing different aspects of development and equality, including a tree, a dove, a flower, a person, a hand, a heart, and a water drop. The background is a light blue gradient with a subtle pattern of small dots.

## Funding healthcare to transform Africa: FEMNET's advocacy and the urgent need to prioritise gender equality in the DRC

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The 12th session of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-12), held in Addis Ababa from 28 to 30 April 2026, concluded with a historic call for radical action. Under the theme ‘Turning the Tide: Transformative and Coordinated Action’, more than 1,500 delegates adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Turning the Tide. This landmark document marks the end of the diagnostic phase: with only four years remaining until the 2030 deadline, Africa must urgently accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **The Addis Ababa Declaration: A Pact for Acceleration and Inclusion**

The findings presented at the forum are alarming: Africa is lagging behind on 12 of the 17 SDGs and is regressing on five others. In response to this challenge, the Addis Ababa Declaration urges Member States to step up their efforts in five priority areas: water (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), industry and innovation (SDG 9), sustainable cities (SDG 11) and partnerships (SDG 17).

At the heart of this strategy lies the principle of ‘Leave No One Behind’ (LNOB). The Declaration emphasises that progress is only genuine if it is achieved more rapidly among the most vulnerable groups, particularly women, young people and people with disabilities, who must be recognised as co-creators of development rather than mere beneficiaries.

### **FEMNET: Transforming the care economy to achieve genuine equality**

Alongside the plenary sessions, FEMNET made a lasting impression with its side event: ‘Funding healthcare, promoting equality – Feminist and youth-led approaches to advancing the SDGs in Africa’. The message from feminist leaders is clear: there can be no social justice without economic justice.

FEMNET has called for the care economy to be placed at the heart of budgetary policies. In sub-Saharan Africa, women spend up to three times as much time as men on unpaid domestic work, a burden that acts as an invisible subsidy to failing public systems. The network proposes bold solutions, including the use of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) as instruments of feminist justice to fund health services and social infrastructure.



### (Focus on the DRC): The urgent need to implement the SDGs amid major challenges

For the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Addis Ababa resolutions represent a vital roadmap. The implementation of the SDGs faces deep-rooted structural obstacles, exacerbated



by a high gender inequality index (0.605 in 2022) “Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UN Women. (2025) Gender Equality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Kinshasa: Ministry of Planning.”

SDGs 6 & 7 (Basic services): The situation is critical, with 35% of the population lacking access to safe drinking water. Women bear 86% of the burden of collecting water, which hinders their empowerment.



Furthermore, 95% of households do not have access to clean cooking fuel, and only 14.5% have electricity.

SDGs 9 & 11 (Infrastructure and Cities): The digital divide marginalises Congolese women, who are 2.2 times less likely to use a computer than men. In urban areas, only 56% of women live in decent housing, highlighting the importance of inclusive and sustainable urban planning.

SDG 17 (Financing and Peace): Funding for gender equality has stagnated, with official development assistance falling from 2% of GDP in 2016 to 1.2% in 2022. The national budget allocated to gender issues (0.1% in 2022) is derisory given the scale of the needs, particularly as armed conflicts continue to devastate infrastructure and undermine the status of women.



## Conclusion: From words to measurable results

The call made in Addis Ababa is an urgent plea: Africa must move from words to action in order to deliver tangible results based on strategic alignment between public policy, funding and multi-sectoral partnerships.

The appeal emphasised the need for collective action involving all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, financial institutions, civil society organisations, the academic community and the United Nations system

Indeed, progress in Africa remains uneven and is hampered by structural constraints such as rising debt, declining official development assistance, persistent conflicts, data gaps, and weaknesses in governance and accountability. These challenges underscore the importance of an inclusive and collaborative approach, in which each stakeholder plays a specific yet complementary role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

The success of the 2030 Agenda in Africa therefore depends on participatory and integrated governance, in which:

Governments provide political leadership and ensure the alignment of national policies; the private sector mobilises investment and innovation; civil society ensures accountability and social inclusion; technical and financial partners support funding and capacity building; research institutions and universities contribute to the production of data and innovations; local communities actively participate in the implementation of solutions tailored to local realities.



In short, as highlighted by the 2026 African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, accelerating progress towards the SDGs in Africa depends less on new commitments than on the ability of stakeholders to coordinate their efforts, mobilise sufficient resources and translate strategies into concrete, measurable results by 2030.

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For the DRC, this means translating international commitments into massive investment in social protection, digital access and an end to the conflicts experienced in the east of the country, particularly in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, which continue to disproportionately affect women and girls, exacerbating gender inequalities.

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2026 in New York will be the next step in bringing this unified African voice to the fore. As stated in the Addis Ababa Declaration, investing in women and leaving no one behind is the only way to reverse the trend and build a prosperous and peaceful Africa by 2030.

