FICCI DE&I CONCLAVE & AWARDS

Building Belonging Brick by Brick | Date: 2nd April 2026

Welcome Address by Uma Seth, ASG, FICCI

- Good morning, everyone.
- It is my pleasure to warmly welcome all of you to the FICCI DE&I Conclave & Awards 2026.
- I extend a special welcome to our distinguished speakers and dignitaries — Mr. Keshav Suri, Chairperson of the FICCI DE&I Task Force and Ms. Sudakshina Bhattacharya, Co-Chair of the FICCI DE&I Committee, along with our esteemed partners, industry leaders, practitioners, and champions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Your presence here reflects a shared commitment to building workplaces that are more equitable, inclusive, and truly representative.
- At the outset, I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support and leadership extended by both Keshavji and Sudakshina to FICCI's DE&I agenda. Their continued engagement, thought leadership, and commitment have played a significant role in strengthening this platform and shaping meaningful conversations that go beyond intent to action.
- I would also like to take a moment to thank our partners — Publicis Sapient, HDFC ERGO, and the Keshav Suri Foundation — for their support in making this conclave possible. It is through such collaborations that we are able to bring together diverse voices and drive meaningful dialogue at scale.
- Over the years, the FICCI DE&I Conclave has evolved into more than just a platform for dialogue. It has become a space for reflection, collaboration, and most importantly, action — where industry comes together not only to exchange ideas, but to collectively shape the future of inclusive workplaces in India.
- This year's theme, *"Building Belonging Brick by Brick,"* is both timely and significant. It reminds us that belonging does not happen by chance. It is built deliberately — through the choices we make in designing our workplaces, our systems, and our cultures.

- As we navigate an increasingly complex and evolving world of work, it is no longer enough to speak about inclusion as an aspiration. The real shift lies in embedding it into the very foundation of how organisations function — from infrastructure and policies to technology and everyday practices. Today's discussions will encourage us to examine how inclusion can be designed into every layer of our organisations, rather than added on as an afterthought.
- At FICCI, we see our role as that of a convener and catalyst — bringing together diverse stakeholders, enabling dialogue, and supporting the translation of intent into action. Through this conclave and our continued efforts, we hope to strengthen this collective journey towards more inclusive and equitable ecosystems.
- We have a very engaging agenda lined up for today — with conversations on inclusive spaces, emerging technologies and bias, and important discussions on advancing rights and representation, along with the recognition of impactful initiatives through the DE&I Awards.
- Before we move forward, we will now hear from Ms. Sudakshina Bhattacharya, who will be sharing her opening address through a special video message.
- I would encourage all of you to participate actively and most importantly, reflect on what inclusion truly means within your own organisations. Because meaningful change begins with asking the right questions — and having the willingness to act on the answers.
- On that note, I once again welcome you all and thank you for being part of this important conversation.
- Thank you.