Thank you chair for giving me the floor.

My name is Pui Yi Wong from Malaysia. I speak today on behalf of 102 civil society organizations working to end plastic pollution in Southeast Asia and beyond.

The Southeast Asian region and its population has been severely impacted by pollution from all stages of the plastic life cycle. We have also been a victim of false narratives casting us as the world’s top plastic polluter. These narratives ignore the fact that large amounts of toxic plastic waste have been and continue to be exported to Southeast Asia.

We call upon our ASEAN leaders to negotiate for a strong international legally binding instrument that prioritises the reduction of primary plastic polymer, eliminate chemicals of concern, and end waste colonialism. We need to ensure transparency by creating a globally harmonised disclosure of chemicals and pollutant release and transfer register system.

We need to reject solutions that do not address the root cause of the plastic crisis which is the overproduction of plastics. Chemical recycling and waste-to-energy incineration only ignore this root cause and compound the problem. Instead, we must protect human rights and ensure a just transition. We must scale up safe reuse and refill systems, mandate EPR and polluter pays principle, and ensure the restoration of polluted sites. These are the real solutions.

As I have observed this week, intersessional work on primary plastic polymer and chemicals of concern are absolutely necessary. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to an instrument that will protect our rights to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment for our generation and the future to come.

I thank you, chair.