First of all, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Canada, to its government and people, for welcoming us all to their beautiful capital, and for the hard work to make our fourth INC Session possible.

I want to thank all member states for the confidence and trust you have placed in me as Chair of the INC, and in my predecessor, Amb. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velásquez. My gratitude also to the Secretariat and my team for your extraordinary, ongoing support.

Between INC3 and 4, I have witnessed the active and productive informal work carried out by member states and stakeholders to prepare our negotiations here in Ottawa and I commend you all for that. Clearly, in this room there is a strong shared commitment to delivering a legally binding international instrument, a multilateral instrument, that meets the scale of the threat to human health and the environment we collectively confront.

Dear friends,

Yesterday, April 22, was International Mother Earth Day. The UN General Assembly adopted Earth Day back in 2009, to serve as an annual global call and remind for action to defend, protect and nurture our shared global environment, humanity’s common home.

As we open this INC-4, I hope that all of us who are here today, this week, can take forward and infuse these negotiations with the spirit of Earth Day.
We are here seeking to advance these negotiations and deliver a treaty because collectively we have recognized that multilateral cooperation – this INC process, a new legally binding international instrument – have a critical role to play in providing the effective and impactful solutions needed to end plastic pollution. The spirit of multilateralism is: “together, we are stronger”.

Let us negotiate with accountability and integrity – grounded in the scientific evidence and facts on the scale and urgency of ending plastic pollution. Let us also approach this task with optimism, that it is both necessary and possible for us to achieve this new treaty.

We know that plastic pollution does not recognize national boundaries. It does not pick and choose which locations or who to contaminate. We know that some regions, countries, and communities are especially vulnerable to plastic pollution. Our collective action needs to be inclusive, attentive the diversity of national circumstances and capacities to tackle plastic pollution, we need to recognise and find ways to address challenges of implementation, and of transformation and transition. We also need to keep in our minds the economic, social and environmental costs of the status quo for all of our countries and the many economic opportunities that tackling plastic pollution will generate.

We are at a crucial moment in our process, and I can feel and see the good will, energy, readiness of every member state in this process, to take us to the goal that we all long for, which is to end plastic pollution, for the good of humanity by protecting human health and the environment.

Dear friends,
There are difficulties. But I am confident that we can find ways to build shared understandings and identify areas of convergence so that we can overcome hurdles. I am committed to do all that I can, to work with you all, to achieve that.

Our job, our collective responsibility and duty in this INC process is to deliver a treaty that reflects the urgency of ending the plastic pollution crisis and that meets the expectations of citizens in all of our countries calling for change.

The message is clear: the world is counting on us to deliver a new treaty that will catalyse and guide the action and international cooperation needed to deliver a future free of plastic pollution. Let’s not fail them!

Let us go forward, collectively, this week, with renewed energy and motivation. I call on each member state, each stakeholder, to focus on what you can do, what proposals you can make, what ambition you can bring, what flexibility you can show, what convergence you can foster, what common ground you can find.

As Chair, with my team, and with the support of the Secretariat, I will give 100% of my energy this week to support your work. But it is only with your commitment to producing an effective treaty, your engagement, your energy and with the spirit of multilateral cooperation that we can make this week and this process work.

Let’s join hands and work together to deliver something extraordinary - new hope, effective action -- for the planet and our peoples.

Thank you very much.