Opening remarks - Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the INC on Plastic Pollution

- His Excellency, Ambassador Luis Vayas, Chair of the INC
- Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme
- Honorable Minister Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this pivotal fourth session of the INC. It feels like a long time since we have met, but in actuality it’s only been four and a half months!

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the Government of Canada for hosting these proceedings here in Ottawa. May I also recognize that we are on tribal lands, and I would like to thank the elder for blessing this meeting yesterday.

Our deep appreciation goes to the donors whose generous contributions have supported the work of the INC and its sessions. Our thanks go to the governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and to the European Commission. This is a long list, but I hope it will be longer at the next session!

I wish to recognize our Chair, Ambassador Luis Vayas, who has taken over the mantle for the rest of the INC process. The Secretariat and I remain committed to supporting the process with you.

I am grateful to the Members of the Bureau who continue to guide and advise us all throughout the process. This stewardship from the regions remains invaluable.

Distinguished delegates,

We have come a long way since our first session in December 2022.

Allow me to remind you that this is a very ambitious timeline, as mandated by the UNEA Resolution. In 18 months, we have gone from sharing our views in Punta del Este, to an options paper in Paris, a zero draft in Nairobi, and now we have before us a revised draft text which reflects the views of all Members.

This is multilateralism at its best.

And now we must deliver an instrument by the end of this year. This is a promise we must make to future generations.

After INC-4 we have only one more session left to finalize the agreement. So, I call on all delegates here today:
Seize this opportunity, make these seven days count, deliver a text that is as close as possible to the final agreement that we all want to see.

And we also need a strong mandate on intersessional work that will allow the Committee to finalize the instrument in Busan.

You delegates know the issues that need to be addressed at this session, and that flexibility will be needed to reach consensus. This is the only way forward.

Do not leave the difficult conversations, the difficult decisions, until the end.

We are not naïve to believe that we don’t face challenges in the coming days. But our determination will overcome these challenges as we have no choice but to succeed.

I am determined to make these seven days count. I hope you will join me.

Before I end, please allow me to take a moment to say thank you to my small but mighty INC Secretariat. And, to the many colleagues supporting us from across the UN System including the best and brightest from many different UNEP divisions and multilateral environmental agreements.

Thank you.