Thank you Chair for the opportunity.

Distinguished Delegates, and Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Juressa Lee from Aotearoa Plastic Pollution Alliance and Greenpeace..

I descend from Indigenous navigators who skillfully harnessed our ancestral wisdom to bravely traverse the vast Pacific Ocean, establishing vibrant communities across its many islands. I carry the legacy of my forebears and shoulder the responsibility for future generations, and today I also represent the collective voice of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus.

I wish to elucidate on certain terms used in this forum pertaining to Indigenous concepts and ways of living rooted deeply in Indigenous values and knowledge systems, which have been long-standing, predating this forum or any contemporary interpretation reflecting hijacking and appropriation.

Circular economy is not a modern innovation; it is Indigenous intellectual property embedded in the lifestyles of First Peoples globally for millennia. Our response to human impacts is based on holistic restorative and regenerative principles, aiming to protect our environments and the health of future generations. It is imperative that the definition and practice of Circular Economy be led and safeguarded by the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, recognising us as the original practitioners and custodians of this wisdom.

When this committee refers to a shift to a circular economy it must reflect this wisdom with the understanding that plastics will never be circular, sustainable, regenerative nor restorative.

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus rejects the term nature-based solutions terminology as it signifies a detachment of Indigenous Knowledge from Indigenous People and our identity. This separation is continued colonisation of Indigenous cultures, where systems of power and oppression cherry-pick elements of our identity they deem valuable or palatable, disregarding our consent and the crucial role we have as rights holders and guardians of that knowledge.
From historical experience, we can tell you that Nature-based solutions means exploitation and capitalisation of Indigenous Knowledge to the exclusion of Indigenous values and worldviews. This always results in adverse impacts to climate, the natural environment and Indigenous communities, be it steel, gum or gold in Aotearoa New Zealand, or coal, diamonds, nickel, gas, water and oil etc in the ancestral lands of my brothers and sisters who stand beside me today.

We forcefully articulate our deep-seated connection between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional knowledge, and our role as primary guardians and practitioners. We reject the external appropriation and misinterpretation of Indigenous Knowledge insisting on respect and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty over intellectual and cultural heritage.

The Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus insists that from herein nature based solutions is correctly referred to by the INC as Indigenous Knowledge and that Indigenous Peoples are able to promote and protect it as the expert owners of that knowledge.

Our final ask is for more space to be created for indigenous knowledge to be incorporated into this process and the final agreement.