Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me extend a very warm welcome to you all on behalf of the Secretariat. We are grateful to the Government of France for hosting our second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee here in Paris. Let me also express our appreciation to the many donors that ensured that we can be here today in such numbers. My sincere thanks go to the governments of Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

I would like to thank our Chair, Ambassador Meza-Cuadra, for his leadership and guidance and his team for the support they have provided to our preparations of this session. Allow me to also express my gratitude to the nominees from the regions for their advice and guidance throughout this intersessional period.

Our Secretariat has grown both in numbers and in experience since Punta del Este and we have been very busy during this intersessional period. In close coordination with the Chair, we made great efforts to ensure that all the official documents were shared six weeks in advance in English, with all language versions available online soon thereafter. Let me express my sincere thanks to the INC secretariat team who have worked tirelessly to ensure that we can make the most of our session over these five days.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues from the Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, and Montreal Protocol as well as my former colleagues from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity for your support and input along the way.
Further, my gratitude goes to the great legal and governance support we have been given by the Law Division and Governance Affairs Office of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Having heard your views in Punta del Este and having seen the many excellent and innovative ideas proposed in the intersessional submissions, I am confident that Members will work diligently to narrow down the options and identify gaps, so that we may leave Paris with a clearer idea of what the instrument will look like, and perhaps with a mandate for a zero draft.

If I have one ask for everyone here today, it is this: We need to let substance, not process dictate what we can achieve here in Paris.

The urgency of addressing plastic pollution continues to grow. The world’s eyes are on us once again to make progress and deliver without delay. We only have three more sessions ahead of us, so my appeal to all of you is clear: Make Paris count.

I am delighted at the overwhelming interest in the plastics negotiations. The world has to come together to fight plastic pollution, and we need all hands on deck in this effort. In this spirit, I would like to welcome all stakeholders to this session. Your contribution on the ground is as important as your voice in these negotiation halls. While we are unfortunately limited in this particular venue, I am delighted at the enormous interest of stakeholders to participate. I promise that I will do everything within my power for the venues of our next sessions to have a larger capacity.

In our effort to manage the space restrictions, may I kindly ask that any participants who are leaving the meeting and not returning to please put your access cards into the designated bins beside security. This way they can be redistributed in an orderly manner.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.