Mr. Chair, Madame Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

As we have reached the end of this first session of the INC, the EU and its Member States would like to express their deepest appreciation to your Chairmanship, for your efforts to lead us through this meeting. Your search for consensus around important issues and to move forward must be praised. The circumstances were not easy indeed and this amplifies the merit of your efforts.

We also thank the Secretariat for preparing this session in a way that allowed Members to prepare for our rich discussions. Additionally, the EU and its MS appreciate the broad participation by stakeholders, which we believe have contributed in a constructive manner during this meeting.

The EU and its MS would also thank the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, for hosting us in this beautiful country and for your hospitality, for providing excellent conference facilities in a welcoming environment.

(pause)

Mr. Chair, we agreed at United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA - that plastic pollution must come to an end. It is a global problem and it needs global solutions.

There is an urgent need for an ambitious plan to end plastic pollution, that delivers on the mandate given by the United Nations Environment Assembly. A plan that must be efficient and effective not only in the short term, but into the future, with all countries united to make the change.

For the EU and its MS this can only be achieved if we can all agree on a global objective, supported by global rules and action that address the sources of plastic pollution. We must ensure that we are reducing the overall production and consumption of plastics to sustainable levels through concrete measures, well-informed targets, and policies to ensure effective interventions –along the entire plastics lifecycle.

Mr. Chair, we need to phase out unnecessary, avoidable, and problematic plastics, including the content of substances of concern. We must introduce core obligations regarding design criteria, and other measures supporting safe and sustainable plastics. These must also aim at preventing leakages of plastic, including microplastics, into the environment. Plastics production and use is global, and national action plans alone will not be sufficient to address all important aspects of the plastics lifecycle.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chair, the EU and its MS recognize that many types of plastics will still be needed in our economies. And these plastics should be kept there as long as possible. We therefore need this instrument to facilitate their reusability, repairability and recyclability, and to ensure plastics are safe and free from substances of concern.
But not even this, Mr. Chair, will be enough. From those most affected by plastic pollution we have heard the strong call for addressing waste management and legacy pollution. We have heard the need for a fair transition that takes into account the informal sector and those working in it, like waste pickers. We have also heard the need for robust means of implementation. The EU and its Member States are ready to engage in these discussions to find a common understanding and a path forward to ‘turn off the tap’.

(pause)

Mr. Chair, the world is watching us. Moving forward, we call on you to guide us to stay on course, stay focused and within the mandate. Our task is to develop an effective treaty that leaves no-one behind. We must not fail. And we call on all the members of the committee to support you in these efforts.

The EU and its MS are optimistic that this committee can deliver and we are motivated to working together with other MS; stakeholders and civil society to progress towards the next meeting of the INC.

It’s time to roll up our sleeves and come together for an ambitious, concrete plan to End Plastic Pollution,

I thank you.