Thank you Mr. Chair,

First of all, I would like to thank Patricia Lewis for the very insightful presentation today as well as for the research carried out in the past which helped to shed light on the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapons. In particular your study “Too close for comfort” on near misses during the Cold War, but also since then, demonstrates that the probability of use is not zero and that risks affect us all.

There are, to quote a study by UNIDIR, real limits to safety. As Erich Schlosser stated at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons: “No machine ever invented is foolproof. It is impossible for fallible human beings to create anything infallible. And beyond technology there are human beings with margins of error in charge of command and control. Indeed, as the picture of accidents, crises, and near-use events involving nuclear weapons during the cold War becomes clearer, there were many instances in which detonation events almost occurred. Evidence from many declassified documents, testimonies and interviews suggests that the world has, indeed, been lucky, given the number of instances in which nuclear weapons were nearly used inadvertently as a result of technology failure, sloppy procedures, miscalculation or error. As former Australian Foreign Minister Evans said: It was sheer dumb luck that we
have not had a nuclear weapon detonation over the past 70 years.

The problem with luck is that it eventually runs out. System analysts prove this statistically that the fact that the worst has not happened over a long time only means that the likelihood for it to happen has increased.

To make things worse, as you have pointed out in your presentation, but also other such as the Global Zero Commission, risks are generally trending in the wrong direction in today's security environment: increased proliferation, the lowering of the technical threshold for nuclear weapon capability, the ongoing modernization of nuclear weapon arsenals in nuclear weapon possessing states, and the role that is attributed to nuclear weapons in the nuclear doctrines of possessor states are among the risk factors.

It was in light of these risks, that the Humanitarian Pledge was presented. This pledge until today is endorsed by 127 States. In this Pledge we call on all nuclear weapons possessor states to take concrete interim measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapon detonations, including reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons and moving nuclear weapons away from deployment into storage, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines and rapid reductions of all types of nuclear weapons. We would like to see this as a recommendation also reflected in the final report.

One of the guiding questions of this panel was how the effectiveness of efforts and steps undertaken to reduce and eliminate risks be measures. This is indeed a very pertinent question, risks are hard to measure and so are measures to reduce those risks. We believe that it is time to place the burden of proof on nuclear weapons states in this regard and recommend that those who claim that nuclear weapons can be managed safely should have to prove their case.

Let me put a question to the panelist: Why do you think nuclear weapon states have not been willing to engage on this? Is only because of secrecy and that they do not want to upset their population?
Our conclusion is clear: There will always remain a residual risk, so that the only real solution would be the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.