Yesterday, I had the privilege of moderating the panel on the roles and responsibilities for nuclear disarmament. We heard a very interesting and comprehensive presentation by Mr. Tarik Rauf, who developed the differences and commonalities between the various State actors involved in the disarmament process.

Mr. Rauf shared a detailed analysis on the responsibilities of the five NPT nuclear-weapon States (NWS). He spoke on the role that we can expect the two major nuclear-weapon possessors to play. He also dwelled upon the case of the NWS outside the NPT, and he gave specific numbers and figures regarding the modernization of nuclear arsenals being undertaken by the nine nuclear-weapon possessors. He then referred to the role that can be played by the States who benefit from extended nuclear deterrence. And he talked about the role of the NNWS under the NPT and/or nuclear-weapon-free zones treaties (NWFZ).

Throughout his presentation, Mr. Tarik Rauf provided a historical perspective and compared the different roles and responsibilities of each one of those groups of States in various frameworks, such as the NPT, the UN Security Council, the CTBT, the FMCT, NWFZ treaties, comprehensive safeguard agreements, negative security assurances, humanitarian dimension, etc.

We then had a very interesting debate on the concept of shared responsibilities. Our panelist enlightened us on the difference between that concept and the one of equal responsibilities. In effect, although NWS and NNWS shoulder the shared responsibility for achieving a world without nuclear weapons, we cannot deny they have different roles and responsibilities to realize this objective.

We also had an interesting exchange of views on the initiatives NNWS could take to help moving the multilateral disarmament negotiations forward. Mr Rauf was a strong advocate of a Global Nuclear Disarmament Summit, which would raise the level of the debate, and help foster commitments on disarmament and put them at the same level of those that currently exist for non-proliferation. Our panelist also acknowledged the potential the humanitarian dimension discussion can take and also encouraged NNWS to contribute to further delegitimitizing and devaluing nuclear weapons.
As I had mentioned in my introductory remarks to the panel, this OEWG is not meant to shape the discussion as a battle of “us against them”. In fact, many of you commented on the need to find common ground so as to bridge the gaps and achieve nuclear disarmament. And I believe the discussion on the common, but different, responsibilities of NNWS and NWS was useful towards this end.