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House of Lords European Union Committee
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Dear Lord Teverson

Thank you for your letter of 9 September. I have provided an update on the current state of negotiations below, including progress made and when I believe that an agreement could be reached.

The UK government has been clear from the outset about the principles underlying our approach: we want a simple, separate fisheries framework agreement which reflects our rights under international law and which provides for annual negotiations over access and sharing opportunities based on the scientific principle of zonal attachment. This is squarely in line with the existing precedent of the EU's current fisheries agreement with Norway. We will not accept any proposals which compromise UK sovereignty over our own fishing waters.

The EU's position still appears to remain centred upon maintaining the status quo and fails to recognise the scale of change that would be needed before any agreement could be acceptable to us.

Discussions continued in Brussels this week. There were useful exchanges, and we covered all issues in some detail – including the most difficult ones. As David Frost has previously stated, an agreement is still possible and is still our goal, but it is clear that it will not be easy to achieve and a lot of work remains to be done.

However, the talks can't go on forever – we want to work as quickly as possible so that we can give certainty to businesses so that they can prepare properly for what will happen at the end of the year. We remain committed to working hard to reach agreement by the middle of October.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Prentis

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