



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Victoria Prentis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

The Earl of Kinnoull
Chairman
Select Committee on the European Union
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

24 November 2020

Dear Lord Kinnoull,

EM COM (2020) 637 FINAL: RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION TO AUTHORISE THE COMMISSION TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE FISHERIES AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY (AND ANNEX)

Thank you for your letter of 11 November 2020, concerning negotiations for the conclusion of the Fisheries Agreement with the UK, EU and Norway.

Trilateral negotiations are indeed anticipated between the UK, EU and Norway to focus on a new North Sea governance arrangement. Such an arrangement is still in development and, from the UK's perspective, should focus on promoting best practice in international fisheries management as well as providing a stable foundation for the longer-term sustainable management of key shared stocks. Significant time will be required to develop such a management regime with our partners around the North Sea.

Annual negotiations on total allowable catches (TACs) for 2021, however, can take place without a trilateral fisheries framework agreement in place. The UK anticipates opening those annual negotiations with the EU and Norway on the TACs for the shared North Sea stocks imminently. Given the time available, it is important to commence these negotiations first before returning to trilateral negotiations ahead of an FFA.

The UK also recently signed an FFA with the Faroe Islands, and we look forward to continuing to build on the historic links with the Faroese as well as taking further steps to responsibly manage the sea. However, a North Sea quadrilateral arrangement involving the Faroe Island, as well as the UK, Norway and the EU, is unnecessary given that those four parties alone do not share jointly managed stocks.

UK industry representatives have been consulted throughout the process of negotiating both the Faroese and Norwegian agreements.

With respect to the end of year negotiations on TACs, DEFRA has been working closely with stakeholders from across the UK to understand and represent their interests, including representatives of fishing organisations, environmental NGOs and the retail sector.

I am writing in similar terms to Sir William Cash MP, Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee. I am also copying this letter to the Clerks of the Commons and Lords Committees, Jessica Mulley and Chris Johnson respectively; Les Saunders, Cabinet Office; and Steve Wigham, Defra Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Prentis

VICTORIA PRENTIS MP