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Neil Parish MP (Chair)
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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8th November 2021

Dear Neil,

Initiation of 2022 annual fisheries negotiations

I am writing today to set out the Government's overall approach across the range of annual fisheries negotiations taking place this autumn. We covered much of this when I had the opportunity to informally meet with you and the Committee on 19 October.

The UK will conduct bilateral negotiations with the EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands as well as negotiations with Coastal States, trilateral UK-EU-Norway negotiations and negotiations with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

Coastal State negotiations started on the 18th October and trilateral UK-EU-Norway negotiations began on 28th October. UK-EU negotiations under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) are expected to start shortly once a date has been agreed for an exchange of positions with the EU and are expected to conclude by 10 December as foreseen in the TCA. Bilateral negotiations with Norway have begun and the Faroe Islands will start at the end of November; these will be under their respective bilateral fisheries framework agreements signed last autumn. Whilst we are optimistic about reaching agreements, any agreement must be balanced, with the UK receiving a fair return for any access granted to our waters.

The UK will continue to be a pragmatic, forward-leaning negotiating partner, working on an equal footing with sovereign States to agree the best outcomes for the whole of the UK: seeking sustainability improvements, supporting the UK fishing industry and demonstrating the benefits of our status as an independent coastal State.

Across the full suite of annual negotiations, the UK will seek to agree total allowable catch (TAC) limitations for 2022 for a range of species, and any quota 'exchanges', arrangements on access to waters, and related management measures. Our aim will be to secure a package of fishing opportunities and access arrangements for 2022 which is consistent with the shared UK fisheries objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020, and which are led by scientific evidence. We aim to deliver sustainability improvements, including increasing the overall number of TACs set in line with scientific advice. We will continue to support the fishing industry in the short and long term, including addressing ongoing 'choke' risks, and ensuring stock-rebuilding initiatives take appropriate account of socio-economic considerations. Finally, we will also ensure that we continue to realise the benefits deriving from our status as an independent coastal State, including maintaining our

regulatory autonomy in the control of access to, and management of, fisheries operating in our waters; and representing UK fisheries and conservation interests in international fora.

The UK will also participate in multilateral negotiations in two key RFMOs: The North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. Our objectives for negotiations in RFMOs will be to seek to ensure that fisheries for RFMO stocks are managed sustainably, that RFMOs adopt measures that protect ecosystems and combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, and to maximise fishing opportunities for the UK within sustainable limits.

In developing and refining negotiating positions, my officials will continue close working with Devolved Administrations, as well as the full range of stakeholder interests.

I have already received some of your thoughts at the informal briefing but welcome any further comments on these broad principles and objectives as they relate to negotiations for 2022, recognising the need for some flexibility to ensure we can secure an outcome in the best interests of the UK. Should you wish to discuss these issues with me directly, I am of course available.

I am copying this letter to Lord Kinnoull, Chair of the Lords European Affairs Committee; Sir William Cash, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee; the Clerks of the Commons and Lords EU Committees; Les Saunders, Cabinet Office; Ben Williams, Clerk of the EFRA Committee and Steve Wigham, Defra Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Yours sincerely,



VICTORIA PRENTIS MP