Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con):

What recent progress has been made on negotiations on reform of the common fisheries policy?

William Hague (The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)

The UK has recently secured important reforms to the common fisheries policy. We have banned the wasteful practice of discarding edible fish, decentralised key decisions on managing fisheries from Brussels to groups of national Governments, and introduced legally binding measures to end overfishing. This is tangible progress towards a more competitive and flexible EU.

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

It is right that we move to end the scandal of discarding healthy fish. It shows how renegotiation within the EU is possible. Will the Foreign Secretary join me in paying tribute to the leadership of my hon. Friend Richard Benyon in his success in those renegotiations, and perhaps even set out for the House what further negotiations a Conservative Government plan?

William Hague (The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; Richmond (Yorks), Conservative)

My hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to our hon. Friend Richard Benyon. This is an important negotiating success. It shows that decision making can be decentralised away from Brussels, producing at the same time a more sustainable and successful policy overall. That decentralisation and the greater accountability to national Parliaments are important aspects of the changes we want to see in the European Union, as the Prime Minister set out in his speech a year ago.

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