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Global Ocean Treaty:

I greatly value our oceans, seas, rivers and lakes which have been at the core of our nation for generations. As well as their economic power, our seas and oceans support a range of diverse marine ecosystems, providing rich biodiversity and acting as an important carbon store.

As constituents may know, the UN treaty was adopted in June and has received over 80 signatures to date. In September, it reached the threshold needed of 60 signatures, and it will come into force 120 days after this date. The UK Government indicated earlier this year that it would look to adopt and ratify the treaty as quickly as possible.

I am concerned about the innumerable threats from human activity faced by our marine environment and the creatures and species that call it home. Marine protected areas are an important tool in safeguarding its future, and it is fundamental that we are focused, committed and ambitious in how we protect our natural waters. We must intensify our efforts to understand, preserve and harness the power of our oceans.

I acknowledge the UK Government's commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030, but I am worried their actions do not show that they will achieve this target. I am concerned that nowhere near enough of our seas are sufficiently protected. I note a report by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change which stated that current protected areas are not sufficient and often in poor condition. It called for an action plan of how to reach 30% of seas protected by 2030.

I welcome the introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas, as recommended by the Benyon Report, but I am disappointed the Government has initially only introduced three pilot areas. In my view, this does not go far enough. We need to show the ambition needed to respond to the climate and nature crises all around us.

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