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## STATEMENT

## by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the visit of Prime Minister Abe to Yasukuni Shrine

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative took note of the visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on December 26. This action is not conducive to lowering tensions in the region or to improving relations with Japan's neighbours, especially China and Republic of Korea.

All countries in the region have reaffirmed their commitment to peace and stability in recent months. The EU has consistently emphasised the need to build on this by handling disputes with careful diplomacy and by refraining from actions which can raise tensions. The EU urges the countries involved to build positive and constructive ties with their neighbours that will bolster confidence, defuse tensions and assure the long term stability of the region."