

Statement from the Ministerial meeting in the context of the Fourteenth meeting (SGE ASF14) of the Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella

Sofia, Bulgaria, 10 September 2019

Considering that:

- African swine fever is a contagious and deadly disease, both for the domestic and the wild pigs and represents a true pan-European problem from a veterinary and economic point of view;
- The prevention, control and eradication of African swine fever (ASF), is a matter of high priority as it represents a serious risk for an important agricultural sector in Europe, including in the countries of the South East Europe;
- The GF-TADs for Europe has been coordinating, since 2014, the regional efforts against the African Swine Fever epizooty, including via regular meetings of the GF-TADs Standing Group of Experts on African Swine Fever for Europe;
- The recent spread of the virus in South East Europe constitutes a serious threat to the Balkan countries and territories.
- Preparedness on ASF is of paramount importance and requires the development of a common strategy at Regional and sub-regional level;
- Priority actions with neighbouring countries should be defined in a collaborative manner – for example enhanced controls at borders, awareness, surveillance, biosecurity measures, hunting practices and wild boar management.

The following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) Countries of South East Europe and in particular the Balkan countries and territories should significantly raise the level of awareness on ASF and take appropriate initiatives to address the situation;
- 2) All European countries, where appropriate, should put their efforts to ensure:
 - Transparency, trust and sharing of information between countries;
 - Enhanced coordination and cooperation including cross-border initiative, with the objective of both to efficiently prevent and control the spreading of ASF;
 - Support (financial, technical and expertise) to the Veterinary authorities in all countries;
 - Development of awareness campaigns and risk communication strategies.