

Collision between *OOCL Europe* and *Xing Hai 668* in position south of LCS1 buoy, Hong Kong on 21 October 2008

1. The Incident

1.1 On 21 October 2008, the Hong Kong registered container ship *OOCL Europe* was en route via the East Lamma Channel, from Hong Kong to Singapore. At about 0543 local time, she altered course to port after she found a vessel crossed ahead from port to starboard. At about the same time, another Chinese registered cargo ship *Xing Hai 668*, on the port bow of *OOCL Europe*, altered course to starboard while she was crossing.

1.2 At 0545, *OOCL Europe* collided with *Xing Hai 668* in position south of LCS1 buoy (approx. 22° 08.9'N 114° 12.7'E) near the precautionary area between the East Lamma Channel Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) in Hong Kong Waters and Dangan Shuidao TSS in Chinese Waters. However the Master of *OOCL Europe* was not aware that the collision happened. After the accident happened, *OOCL Europe* reported to Mardep that she was in near miss with the crossing vessel but was clear from the former vessel without collision. *OOCL Europe* continued her passage to Singapore without stopping after the incident.

1.3 Subsequently, the bow of *Xing Hai 668* sustained serious damage and took in water. The crew found some black oil on the bow and in the vicinity waters of own ship. All the eleven (11) crewmembers on *Xing Hai 668* boarded the boat stowed forward and were later rescued by the Hong Kong Marine Police near south of Yuen Kok, Lamma Island. After drifted to the west of about 1 n.m. from the collision position, she subsequently sank near to west of LCS1 buoy.

1.4 On 22 October 2008, *OOCL Europe* found that 320 tonnes of bunker fuel oil was lost from the breached No.2 heavy fuel oil tank on the starboard side of the vessel.

1.5 The investigation revealed the following main contributed factors to the accident:

- The Second Officer, who was the Officer of the Watch on board *Xing Hai 668* at the time of the accident, was not qualified and certificated to keep the navigational watch; and
- The attention of Master of *OOCL Europe* was distracted by the long

communication on the VHF radio and relied on the scanty information to assess the risk of collision. He failed to take appropriate action in ample time to avoid collision in accordance with the COLREGS.

2. Lessons

The lessons learnt from this incident are:

- Vessel shall be manned according to the requirement of the Minimum Safe Manning Certificate;
- Officers should avoid relying on scanty information to assess the risk of collision, and be aware of the risk of using VHF radio for bridge-to-bridge communication for the collision avoidance actions (Refer to the Hong Kong Merchant Shipping Information Notes - MSIN 14/2009).