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HONG KONG MERCHANT SHIPPING INFORMATION NOTE

Collision between a ro-ro cargo ship and a fishing vessel in the Yellow Sea

To : *Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Masters, Officers and Crew*

Summary

A Hong Kong-registered ro-ro cargo ship collided with a fishing vessel in the Yellow Sea, causing the fishing vessel sank with all eight fishermen on board missing. This Note draws the attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers, and crew to the lessons learnt from this accident.

The Incident

1. A Hong Kong registered ro-ro cargo ship (the vessel) collided with a fishing vessel in the Yellow Sea at night when the vessel was en route from Dalian to Shanghai, China. At that moment, the weather was fair with visibility of seven nautical miles and smooth sea condition. Due to the collision, the fishing vessel sank and all eight fishermen on board went missing.

2. The investigation into the accident revealed that the main contributory factors of the accident were:

- (a) the vessel did not at all times maintain a proper look-out in compliance with Rule 5 “Look-out” of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS). The officer on watch of the vessel failed to determine the risk of collision and did not take action to avoid collision; and
- (b) the navigational watchkeeping arrangement of the vessel was not adequate for maintaining a safe navigational watch as per the requirements of the Seafarers’ Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Code (STCW Code). The duty chief officer was the sole look-out on the bridge during hours of darkness, and carried out another task not relevant to his look-out duty.

3. The following safety issues were also identified in the investigation:
- (a) the manning of the fishing vessel did not comply with the minimum safe manning requirements of the local administration, i.e. short of one qualified Grade 2 master and one qualified Grade 2 officer; and
 - (b) the implementation of the vessel's Safety Management System (SMS) was found to be ineffective, such as failure to ensure that watchkeeping arrangement on the bridge was adequate; failure to maintain proper look-outs at all the times during the voyage; and failure to properly maintain Voyage Data Recorder System (VDRS) which was a vital recording equipment of shipboard operations.

Lessons Learnt

4. All ships must be operated safely at all times in accordance with the requirements of COLREGS and STCW Code, particularly in the following aspects:
- (a) the master should ensure an adequate watchkeeping arrangement for maintaining a safe navigational watch;
 - (b) the officers on navigational watch should keep a proper look-out at all times to comply with the requirements of Rule 5 of COLREGS (Look-out), and should not take other tasks not relevant to his look-out duty;
 - (c) the navigational instructions and procedures of SMS must contain guidance relating to circumstances when the officer of the watch may be the sole look-out during daylight, and the officer on watch should not be the sole look-out during hours of darkness;
 - (d) the shipboard equipment should be maintained properly to ensure the reliability of such equipment and system including the VDRS; and
 - (e) ships should be manned sufficiently and should at least meet the conditions on the Minimum Safe Manning Document; ships should confirm that the identification information of Automatic Identification System (AIS) installed on board are correct.
5. The attention of shipowners, ship managers, ship operators, masters, officers and crew is drawn to the lessons learnt above.