Collision between Great Wealth and Zhe Xiang Yu 27009 off Zhoushan, China on 13 May 2012

1. The Incident

1.1 On 13 May 2012 at about 0418, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier Great Wealth and the Chinese fishing vessel Zhe Xiang Yu 27009 collided with each other in a position about 60 nautical miles off Zhoushan in the East China Sea, China. At the time of the accident, it was raining with north-northeasterly wind of force 5 to 6, the sea wave was about 2 metres high and the visibility was 4 nautical miles.

1.2 After the collision, Zhe Xiang Yu 27009 sustained damages to the bow, the bulwark and the side plate of the bridge on the starboard side and some wooden boards on deck were found missing during the accident. One crew member was missing. On the other hand, Great Wealth suffered several paint scratches on her bow and minor indents at the forecastle Bosun store.

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

- The chief officer left the bridge without being properly relieved by another navigating officer. The lookout onboard Great Wealth was unqualified at the material time. Therefore Great Wealth neither complied with the requirement of Regulation II/1 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) nor Rule 5 (Look-out) of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS);

- Due to no qualified watch-keeping officer on the bridge, Great Wealth failed to comply with the requirements of the COLREGS, such as to use all available means to determine if risk of collision existed (Rule 7-Risk of collision), to take positive and substantial action in ample time (Rule 8-Action to avoid collision) and to keep well clear of the stand-on vessel (Rule 16-Action by Give-way vessel). The action of collision avoidance taken by the deck cadet was adjusting the ship’s course by “auto-pilot” at time of three minutes before the collision to give way to the fishing vessel. This action was neither substantial nor in a timely manner; and

- Zhe Xiang Yu 27009 did not comply with Rule 5 (Look-out) of the COLREGS. She did not maintain a proper lookout.
2. Lessons

The lessons learnt from this incident are:

- The duty navigating officer shall never leave the bridge without being properly relieved by another navigating officer.

- The master and the navigating officers shall strictly comply with the STCW and the COLREGS at all times.