Loss of Master of Hong Kong Registered Log Carrier “New Lucky III” at 35 Nautical Miles Northwest of Taipei on 15 September 2012

1. The incident

1.1 On 15 September 2012, the Hong Kong registered log carrier New Lucky III, which was fully laden with logs, encountered severe weather and very rough seas caused by typhoon “Sanba”. The vessel was en-route from Papua New Guinea to Jingling, China.

1.2 The vessel lost her stability gradually by water ingress into cargo holds and was abandoned when she eventually listed up to 30 degrees to starboard at 35nm northwest of Taipei.

1.3 The master ordered to abandon ship and the crew lowered the lifeboats into water. Incidentally, the master fell into water and was lost at sea. All other crew were rescued by the Taipei rescue force. The vessel was salvaged successfully and arrived at Taipei under tow by the salvage tug on 18 September 2012.

1.4 The investigation revealed that the main contributing factors to the accident were:

a). the master and chief officer of the vessel did not conduct detailed assessments of ship stability upon sailing and during the voyage;

b). the tarpaulins for the hatch covers on No.1 cargo hold were damaged. Seawater entered the cargo hold while the vessel was sailing in rough seas. Free surface effect of accumulated water in No.1 Cargo hold adversely affected ship stability and caused the ship to list;

c). the master and the chief officer took a series of remedial actions to upright the vessel without prior assessment to determine their effects on ship stability;

d). crew members on board were not well trained and prepared for emergency situation; and

e). The life-saving appliances were not maintained in readily operational conditions.
2. Lessons learnt

2.1 Ship hull water-tight integrity including load line items should be ensured during cargo operations, before sailing and during the whole voyage;

2.2 Stability of ship should be assessed before the voyage and continuously assessed during the voyage to comply with statutory requirements at all time;

2.3 Voyage plan should cover contingency measures that could be applied in case of emergencies encountered during the voyage of the vessel;

2.4 Lifesaving appliances should be properly maintained in a readily operational condition; and

2.5 Crew members should be well trained for all possible emergency situations.