Fatal accident of man over board from Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “Great Fluency” while alongside at Liepaja, Latvia on 16 February 2017

The incident

1.1 On 12 February 2017, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “Great Fluency” (the vessel) berthed starboard side to alongside berth No.45 at the port of Liepaja, Latvia to load cargo. The cargo operation was completed at 1030 hours on 15 February 2017 and the vessel was awaiting departure.

1.2 After drinking alcohol and tea together with his colleagues in the night of 15 February 2017, the assistant electrical officer (AEO) opened the watertight door on the port side and went outside the accommodation on “A” deck with unknown reason at about 0050 hours 16 February 2017. About 1 to 2 minutes later, the AEO was found to have fallen overboard and floating on the sea surface unconsciously by his colleagues above mentioned. The casualty was rescued on deck within a few minutes, and was applied first-aid treatment immediately. The casualty was declared dead later due to drowning.

1.3 There was no witness for the accident of falling overboard. The investigation identified the following factors to this accident:

- About 5 hours before the accident, the casualty drank strong liquor (vodka bought from shore by himself) together with a few crew members inside the crew’s cabin in the evening. His safety awareness might be impaired by alcohol effect which significantly increased the risk of him losing his balance and fell overboard.

- It was failure on board the vessel to implement effectively the alcohol policy set by the company.

Lessons learnt

2.1 The crew members should never abuse alcohol on board the vessel.

2.2 It should be strictly implemented on board the vessel of the alcohol policy set by the company. Particularly, the crew members should be reiterated to avoid abuse alcohol by restricting to bring on board strong liquors from shore.