

A fatal accident on board the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “GREAT FLUENCY” at Liepaja, Latvia on 16 February 2017

1. The incident

- 1.1 On 12 February 2017, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier “Great Fluency” (*the vessel*) was berthed starboard side alongside berth No. 45 of the port of Liepaja, Latvia to load cargo of coal in bulk. Upon completion of loading at 1030 hours on 15 February 2017, *the vessel* was awaiting departure.
- 1.2 During the cargo operation in the port, the assistant electrical officer (*the AEO*) had bought a bottle of vodka from shore. From about 1630 hours to 1900 hours on 15 February 2017 while *the vessel* was still awaiting departure, *the AEO*, chief cook, fitter and an oiler consumed the bottle of vodka together at the oiler’s cabin and the gathering continued until about 0045 hours on 16 February 2017. With unknown reason, *the AEO* then opened the weathertight door and went outside the accommodation block. About 1 to 2 minutes later, *the AEO* was found fallen overboard and floated on the sea surface.
- 1.3 Rescue operation was initiated immediately at 0052 hours. *The AEO* was recovered from the water by crew members at 0105 hours. First-aid treatment was applied immediately. He was declared dead later due to drowning.
- 1.4 Although there was no eyewitness for *the AEO*’s falling overboard, the investigation revealed the following contributory factors to this accident:
 - (a) *The AEO*, under the influence of alcohol, might have lost his balance and fell into the sea from the shipside; and
 - (b) *The vessel* failed to implement the alcohol policy set by the company.

2. Lessons learnt

- 2.1 It is important that masters, all officers and crew on board their vessels even during rest hours should strictly follow the alcohol policy set by the company.