Taxation

Swiss Taxation

Withholding Tax on Dividends and Other Distributions

Dividends paid and similar cash or in-kind distributions that we make to a holder of shares or ADSs (including liquidation proceeds and stock dividends and taxable income resulting from partial liquidation) are subject to a Swiss federal withholding tax at a rate of 35 percent. A repurchase of shares by us for the purpose of a capital reduction is defined as a partial liquidation of the Company. In this case, the difference between the nominal value of the shares and their repurchase price is qualified as taxable income. The same would be true upon a repurchase of shares if we were not to dispose of the repurchased shares within six years after the repurchase, or if 10 percent of outstanding shares were exceeded. We must withhold the tax from the gross distribution and pay it to the Swiss Federal Tax Administration.

Obtaining a Refund of Swiss Withholding Tax for U.S. Residents

The Convention between the Swiss Confederation and the United States of America for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with Respect to Taxes on Income, which was signed on October 2, 1996 (including any amendments thereto) and which we will refer to in the following discussion as the Treaty, allows U.S. resident individuals or U.S. corporations to seek a refund of the Swiss withholding tax paid in respect of our shares or ADSs if they qualify for benefits under the Treaty. U.S. resident individuals and U.S. corporations holding less than 10 percent of the voting rights in respect of our shares or ADSs are entitled to seek a refund of withholding tax to the extent the tax withheld exceeds 15 percent of the gross dividend or other distribution. U.S. corporations holding 10 percent or more of the voting rights of our shares or ADSs are entitled to seek a refund of withholding tax to the extent the tax withheld exceeds 5 percent of the gross dividend or other distribution. Qualifying U.S. pension or other retirement arrangements and – as from January 1, 2020 – also individual retirement saving plans that do not control the Company are entitled to seek a full refund of withholding tax.

Claims for refunds must be filed with the Swiss Federal Tax Administration, Eigerstrasse 65, 3003 Berne, Switzerland, no later than December 31 of the third year following the calendar year in which the dividend or similar distribution became payable. The form used for obtaining a refund is Swiss Tax Form 82 (82C for companies; 82E for other entities; 82I for individuals; 82R for regulated investment companies (RICs)). This form may be obtained from any Swiss Consulate General in the United States, from the Swiss Federal Tax Administration at the address above or under www.estv.admin.ch. The form must be filled out in triplicate with each copy duly completed and signed before a notary public in the United States. The form must be accompanied by evidence of the deduction of withholding tax withheld at the source (including tax voucher issued by the custodian bank).

Stamp Duties upon Transfer of Securities

The sale of shares or ADSs, whether by Swiss resident or non-resident holders, may be subject to a Swiss securities transfer stamp duty of up to 0.15 percent calculated on the sale proceeds if it occurs through or with a Swiss bank or other Swiss securities dealer as defined in the Swiss Federal Stamp Tax Act. In addition to the stamp duty, the sale of shares or ADSs by or through a member of the SIX Swiss Exchange may be subject to a stock exchange levy.

United States Taxes

The following is a summary of the material U.S. federal income tax consequences of the ownership by U.S. holders (defined below) of shares or ADSs. This summary does not purport to address all of the tax considerations that may be relevant to a decision to purchase, own or dispose of shares or ADSs. This summary assumes that U.S. holders hold shares or ADSs as capital assets for U.S. federal income tax purposes. This summary does not address tax considerations applicable to holders that may be subject to special tax rules, such as U.S. expatriates, dealers or traders in securities or currencies, partnerships owning shares or ADSs, tax-exempt entities, banks and other financial institutions, regulated investment companies, traders in securities that elect to apply a mark-to-market method of accounting, insurance companies, holders that own (or are deemed to own) at least 10 percent or more (by voting power or value) of the stock of ABB, investors whose functional currency is not the U.S. dollar, persons subject to the alternative minimum tax, persons subject to special tax accounting rules as a result of any item of gross income with respect to the shares or ADSs being taken into account in an applicable financial statement, persons that will hold shares or ADSs as a position in a straddle or as part of a hedging or conversion transaction for U.S. tax purposes and persons who are not U.S. holders. This discussion does not address aspects of U.S. taxation other than U.S. federal income taxation, nor does it address state, local or foreign tax consequences of an investment in shares or ADSs.

This summary is based (i) on the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, U.S. Treasury Regulations and judicial and administrative interpretations thereof, in each case as in effect and available on the date of this registration statement and (ii) in part, on representations of the depositary and the assumption that each obligation in the deposit agreement and any related agreement will be performed in accordance with its terms. The U.S. tax laws and regulations and the interpretation thereof are subject to change, which change could apply retroactively and could affect the tax consequences described below.

For purposes of this summary, a U.S. holder is a beneficial owner of shares or ADSs that, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, is:

- a citizen or individual resident of the United States,
- a corporation (or other entity treated as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes) created or organized in or under the laws of the United States or any state, including the District of Columbia,
- an estate if its income is subject to U.S. federal income taxation regardless of its source, or
- a trust if such trust validly has elected to be treated as a U.S. person for U.S. federal income tax purposes or if (i) a U.S. court can exercise primary supervision over its administration and (ii) one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all of its substantial decisions.

If a partnership (including any entity or arrangement treated as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes) is a beneficial owner of shares or ADSs, the treatment of a partner in the partnership will generally depend on the status of the partner and the activities of the partnership. If you are a partner in a partnership that holds shares or ADSs you should consult your tax advisor.

Each prospective purchaser should consult the purchaser’s tax advisor with respect to the U.S. federal, state, local and foreign tax consequences of acquiring, owning or disposing of shares or ADSs.

Ownership of ADSs in General, and Exchange of ADSs for Shares

For U.S. federal income tax purposes, a holder of ADSs generally will be treated as the owner of the shares represented by the ADSs, and the following discussion assumes that such treatment will be respected. If so, no gain or loss will be recognized upon an exchange of shares for ADSs or an exchange of ADSs for shares. The U.S. Treasury has expressed concerns that intermediaries in the chain of ownership between the holder of an ADS and the issuer of the security underlying the ADS may be taking actions that are inconsistent with the beneficial ownership of the underlying shares. Accordingly, the creditability of foreign taxes and the availability of the reduced tax rate for dividends received by certain non-corporate U.S. holders, each described below, could be affected by actions taken by intermediaries in the chain of ownership between the holder of an ADS and ABB.

Distributions

In general, for U.S. federal income tax purposes, the gross amount of distributions (other than certain distributions, if any, of shares distributed to all shareholders of ABB, including holders of ADSs) made to you with respect to shares or ADSs, including the amount of any Swiss taxes withheld from the distribution, will constitute dividends and be includible in gross income in the year received to the extent of ABB's current and accumulated earnings and profits (as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles).

Non-corporate U.S. holders generally will be taxed on such distributions at the lower rates applicable to long-term capital gains (i.e., gains from the sale of capital assets held for more than one year) with respect to distributions during 2021, provided that the U.S. holder meets certain holding period and other requirements and provided that such distributions constitute "qualified dividends" for U.S. federal income tax purposes. Distributions treated as dividends will not be treated as "qualified dividends" if we were to be treated as a "passive foreign investment company" (PFIC) for U.S. federal income tax purposes in the year that the dividend is paid or in the year prior to the year that the dividend is paid. Based on certain estimates of its gross income and gross assets and the nature of its business, ABB believes that it will not be classified as a PFIC for the taxable year ended December 31, 2021 and does not expect to be classified as a PFIC for the taxable year ending December 31, 2022. ABB's status in the current year and in future years will depend on its assets and activities in those years. ABB has no reason to believe that its assets or activities will change in a manner that would cause it to be classified as a PFIC. However, as PFIC status is a factual matter that depends upon, among other things, the composition of the income and assets, and the market value of assets, as reflected in market capitalization, of ABB and its subsidiaries that must be determined annually at the close of each taxable year, there can be no certainty regarding ABB's PFIC status in any particular year until the close of that year. U.S. holders are urged to consult their own tax advisors regarding the availability of the reduced dividend rate in light of their own particular circumstances and the consequences to them if ABB were to be treated as a PFIC with respect to any taxable year.

Dividends paid to U.S. corporate holders will not be eligible for the dividends received deduction generally allowed to corporate U.S. holders.

If you are a U.S. holder and distributions with respect to shares or ADSs exceed ABB's current and accumulated earnings and profits as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles, then the excess generally would be treated first as a tax-free return of capital to the extent of your adjusted tax basis in your shares or ADSs. Any amount in excess of the amount of the dividend and the return of capital would generally be treated as capital gain. ABB does not maintain calculations of its earnings and profits under U.S. federal income tax principles, so a U.S. holder should expect all cash distributions to be reported as dividends for U.S. federal income tax purposes.

If you are a U.S. holder, then dividends paid in Swiss francs, including the amount of any Swiss taxes withheld from the dividends, will be included in your gross income in an amount equal to the U.S. dollar value of the Swiss francs calculated by reference to the spot exchange rate in effect on the day the dividends are includible in income. In the case of ADSs, dividends generally are includible in income on the date they are received by the depositary, regardless of whether the payment is in fact converted into U.S. dollars. If dividends paid in Swiss francs are converted into U.S. dollars on the day they are includible in income, then you generally should not be required to recognize foreign currency gain or loss with respect to the conversion. However, any gains or losses resulting from the conversion of Swiss francs between the time of the receipt of dividends paid in Swiss francs and the time the Swiss francs are converted into U.S. dollars will be treated as ordinary income or loss to you. The amount of any distribution of property other than cash will be the fair market value of the property on the date of distribution.

If you are a U.S. holder, then dividends received by you with respect to shares or ADSs will be treated as foreign source income, which may be relevant in calculating your foreign tax credit limitation. Subject to certain conditions and limitations, Swiss tax withheld on dividends may be deducted from your taxable income or credited against your U.S. federal income tax liability. However, to the extent that you would be entitled to a refund of Swiss withholding taxes pursuant to the U.S.-Switzerland tax treaty, you may not be eligible for a U.S. foreign tax credit with respect to the amount of such withholding taxes which may be refunded even if you fail to claim the refund. See “—Swiss Taxation—Obtaining a Refund of Swiss Withholding Tax for U.S. Residents”. The limitation on foreign taxes eligible for credit is calculated separately with respect to specific classes of income. For this purpose, dividends distributed by ABB generally will constitute passive income. The rules relating to the determination of the U.S. foreign tax credit are complex, and you should consult your tax advisor to determine whether and to what extent you would be entitled to this credit.

Sale, Exchange or other Taxable Disposition of Shares or ADSs

If you are a U.S. holder that holds shares or ADSs as capital assets, then you generally will recognize capital gain or loss for U.S. federal income tax purposes upon a sale, exchange or other taxable disposition of your shares or ADSs in an amount equal to the difference between your adjusted tax basis in the shares or ADSs and the amount realized on their disposition. If you are a non-corporate U.S. holder, the maximum marginal U.S. federal income tax rate applicable to the gain is generally lower than the maximum marginal U.S. federal income tax rate applicable to ordinary income (other than certain dividends) if your holding period for the shares or ADSs exceeds one year (i.e., long term capital gains). If you are a U.S. holder, then the gain or loss, if any, recognized by you generally will be treated as U.S. source income or loss, for U.S. foreign tax credit purposes.

If you are a U.S. holder and you receive any foreign currency on the disposition of shares or ADSs, the amount realized will be the U.S. dollar value of the payment received, translated at the spot rate of exchange on the date of the taxable disposition. If the shares are treated as traded on an established securities market, a cash basis U.S. holder and an accrual basis U.S. holder who has made a special election (which must be applied consistently from year to year and cannot be changed without the consent of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service) will determine the U.S. dollar value of the amount realized in foreign currency by translating the amount received at the spot rate of exchange on the settlement date of the disposition. An accrual basis U.S. holder that does not make the special election will recognize U.S. source ordinary income or loss as a result of currency fluctuations between the trade date and the settlement date of the disposition of the shares or ADSs.

Medicare Tax

For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2012, certain U.S. holders who are individuals, estates or trusts must pay a 3.8 percent tax on the lesser of (i) the U.S. holder's "net investment income" for the relevant taxable year and (ii) the excess of the U.S. holder's modified adjusted gross income for the taxable year over a certain threshold (which in the case of individuals will be between $125,000 and $250,000, depending on the individual's circumstances). A U.S. holder's net investment income will generally include its dividend income and its net gains from the disposition of shares or ADSs, unless such income or net gains are derived in the ordinary course of the conduct of a trade or business (other than a trade or business that consists of certain passive or trading activities). If you are a U.S. holder that is an individual, estate or trust, you are urged to consult your tax advisor regarding the applicability of the Medicare tax to your income and gains in respect of your investment in shares or ADSs.

Information with Respect to Foreign Financial Assets

Certain U.S. holders who are individuals (and certain entities) that hold an interest in "specified foreign financial assets" (which may include the shares) are required to report information relating to such assets, subject to certain exceptions (including an exception for shares held in accounts maintained by certain financial institutions). Penalties can apply if U.S. holders fail to satisfy such reporting requirements. U.S. holders should consult their tax advisors regarding the effect, if any, of this requirement on their ownership and disposition of the shares.

Backup Withholding and Information Reporting

U.S. backup withholding tax and information reporting requirements generally apply to certain payments to certain non-corporate holders of stock. Information reporting generally will apply to payments of dividends on, and to proceeds from the sale or redemption of, shares or ADSs made within the United States to a shareholder of shares or ADSs (other than an exempt recipient, including a corporation, a payee that is not a U.S. person that provides an appropriate certification, and certain other persons).

A payor will be required to withhold backup withholding tax from any payments of dividends on, or the proceeds from the sale or redemption of, shares or ADSs within the United States to you, unless you are an exempt recipient, if you fail to furnish your correct taxpayer identification number or otherwise fail to comply with, or establish an exemption from backup withholding tax requirements. U.S. holders who are required to establish their exempt status may be required to provide such certification on U.S. Internal Revenue Service Form W-9. Backup withholding is not an additional tax. The amount of any backup withholding from a payment to you will be allowed as a credit against your U.S. federal income tax liability and may entitle you to a refund, provided that the required information is furnished timely to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

THE ABOVE SUMMARIES ARE NOT INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE A COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF ALL TAX CONSEQUENCES RELATING TO THE OWNERSHIP OF SHARES OR ADSs. PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS OF SHARES OR ADSs SHOULD CONSULT THEIR TAX ADVISORS CONCERNING THE TAX CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR PARTICULAR SITUATIONS.

Documents on display

We are subject to the informational requirements of the Exchange Act. In accordance with these requirements, we file reports and other information with the SEC. The SEC maintains a Web site at *www.sec.gov* that contains reports, including this Annual Report and the exhibits thereto, and other information regarding registrants that file electronically with the SEC. Our Annual Reports on Form 20-F, reports on Form 6-K and some of the other information we submit to the SEC may be accessed through this website. In addition, material that we file can be inspected at the offices of the New York Stock Exchange at 11 Wall Street, New York, New York 10005.