

Ron Popper
Consultant, Business and Human Rights
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Overview

A highly experienced senior manager, lecturer and board member specialised in corporate responsibility, business and human rights, sustainability and stakeholder engagement, with a strong record in due diligence, developing strategies and implementing programs in different parts of the world. He also has broad experience of international journalism, corporate communications, as well as many years of leading communications and human rights training programs.

At the ABB multinational (2001-2016), he was Group Vice President and Head of Corporate Responsibility, working mainly on human rights, community relations and the management of sensitive projects in high-risk countries. He initiated and oversaw major changes in group-wide processes and work, as well as leading global training programs. A member of the Group-level security and crisis management task force for 12 years.

Since leaving ABB in August 2016, he has worked as a consultant on business and human rights for different organizations, and has lectured at universities in Switzerland, Norway, Italy, the UK and US. He has taken up board roles, among others, at the Institute for Human Rights and Business, and the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights. Some of his most recent work has involved Iran and Myanmar.

Business and human rights

2016 -: CEO, board member, consultant and lecturer focused on corporate responsibility and business and human rights.

- CEO, Global Business Initiative on Human Rights (from 2019)
- Board member and Trustee of the Institute for Human Rights and Business
- Consultant on business and human rights for companies and organisations, mainly in Switzerland
- Director of the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (from 2017)
- Director and Governance Committee member, Centre for Sport and Human Rights (from 2018)
- Lectures on business and human rights at St Gallen and Zurich universities, as well as Bergen, NYU and LSE
- Board member of the Responsible Mining Foundation (from 2017)
- Member of FIFA Governance Committee (Jan-May 2017) focusing on new human rights policy

2006-2016: Head of Corporate Responsibility, ABB Group, responsible for human rights issues, community relations, certain areas of stakeholder engagement (see below); managing sensitive issues

Embedding human rights in business practice: Developed company human rights policy and statement (2007); led embedding of human rights criteria in management processes; carried out regular due diligence on projects e.g. Chile, Ethiopia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Peru, Russia, Sudan, Turkey;

due diligence for mergers and acquisitions: Germany, Turkey; review of labor and human rights standards and policy for supply chain; launched and led global human rights network (2011-16)

Internal business and human rights training: Face-to-face executive awareness raising and capacity building training sessions in Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Italy, Finland, Malaysia, UAE, US, Sweden, Singapore, Switzerland. Global Webex sessions

Public speeches/panels: Focusing on the corporate responsibility to respect human rights across the value chain, as well as implementation, training, opportunities and challenges. Invitations from UN, national and regional organizations. OSCE, US, Brazil, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Malaysia, Netherlands, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, UAE, UK

Stakeholder engagement

- **Investors:** regular meetings on sustainability issues, including human rights: France, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, US pension funds
- **NGOs:** Amnesty International, Swiss NGOs, International Rivers Network, Sudan Divestment Task Force etc.
- **UN:** Input into Ruggie process; UN Global Compact (New York and Switzerland); helped found the UNGC network in Sudan
- **Government:** Regular input to Swiss government on the development of a National Action Plan for business and human rights
- **Community relations:** Developed and introduced community engagement measurement process, and stakeholder engagement guidelines for ABB
- **Representation work:** Representing the company at international human rights events (e.g. annual UN Stakeholder Forum, children's rights meetings in Sweden and US)
- **Philanthropy:** Regular visitor to ABB community projects (e.g. Brazil, India, South Africa)
- **Country evaluation visits** (e.g. Myanmar 2014, Iran in 2007, Sudan 2005/6)

Management of global foundation: The ABB Jürgen Dormann Foundation for Engineering Education. Management team member (2007-2010), Managing Director and Board Secretary (2010-2016); Supporting talented but financially needy students worldwide. The foundation has doubled in size during my leadership period.

University training courses in Switzerland: Basel, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, St Gallen, Zurich. Elsewhere: Bergen, Norway, LSE, London, Stern School of Business, NYU.

Memberships:

- Business leaders Initiative on Human Rights (2005-2009)
- Global Business Initiative on Human Rights (2009-2016) including steering committee
- UN Global Compact Labor and Human Rights Working Group (2010-2015)
- WEF Global Agenda Council on Human Rights (2003-2015)
- Swiss Competence Center for Human Rights Advisory Board (2013-2015)
- Zurich University Competence Center for Human Rights Advisory Board (2013-)

Communications and training

Journalism/Communications: Focus on international relations and diplomacy; specialisation Middle East and parts of Asia

2001-2005: Head of Corporate Communications Editorial Services, ABB Group (executive speeches, internal and external messaging, annual report, press releases etc). Editor ABB Annual Report (2002-2005); Editor/co-editor ABB Sustainability Report (2005-2015)

1997-2001: Head of English Service at Swiss Radio International/swissinfo

1982-1997: Sub-editor, writer, correspondent at Swiss Radio International (assignments included China, Japan, Geneva including first US-USSR summit)

1980-1982: Sub-editor, BBC World Service London

1978-1979: Night editor, sub editor, reporter: Gulf Daily News (Bahrain, UAE)

1975-1978: Reporter, sub-editor South Shields Gazette (evening paper), UK

Communications training courses: Focus on improving writing and messaging skills, and media training. Cambodia, Canada, China, Germany, Norway, Switzerland

Management of global partnerships:

- WWF International: Developing rural electrification and energy efficiency projects in Tanzania, China, India and South Africa (2008-2014)
- International Committee of the Red Cross: Developing a series of joint activities, including technical support and training, based on a long-term sponsorship agreement (2006-2016)

Film making: Script writer of two international award winning films on bringing electrical power to rural communities in India and Tanzania (2005, 2010); Script writer and editor of Dormann Foundation film (2013)

Crisis management:

- Member of ABB's central crisis task force (2004-2016) helping to manage a wide range of issues e.g. terrorism (Algeria), kidnap (Nigeria), civil unrest (Egypt), pandemics (Avian flu, Ebola); part of lead team for Saudi Arabia terror attack (2004)
- Led ABB's crisis response to the illegal detention of ABB manager in Libya (2008-2010). Took responsibility for communications with hostage; family liaison management; diplomatic discussions with Swiss government and other stakeholders; media output
- Initiated the formation of a family care network as part of ABB's crisis response capability
- Media/crisis training for senior managers at ABB, workshops at ABB, Lukoil, Novartis, XL

Personal details

Date of birth: 1.6.1954

Nationality: British and Swiss dual nationality

Languages: English (mother tongue); German, French and Swiss German (all very good)

Education: Oriel College, Oxford. BA History and French (1972-5)
St Paul's School, London (1967-72)

Hobbies: International politics and current affairs; books, photography, travel, sport