

Josef Ackermann is to leave Deutsche Bank after a decade as chief executive after failing to win shareholder support to become the bank's supervisory board chairman.

The Swiss investment banker, one of the world's most prominent financiers, will leave Deutsche when his contract expires in May.

Speculation immediately arose about Mr Ackermann moving to UBS, Switzerland's largest bank by assets. Mr Ackermann is a known admirer of Axel Weber, the former president of the German central bank, who is due to take over as chairman at UBS.

However, senior executives at the Swiss bank said Mr Ackermann had been ruled out for the job as UBS chief executive or holding any post.

Deutsche said it would now propose Paul Achleitner, a board member at insurer Allianz, as supervisory board chairman. Allianz said it would ask its board to allow Mr Achleitner – a former head of Goldman Sachs in Germany – to make the move to Deutsche.

Mr Ackermann's decision to abandon attempts to join the supervisory board will be seen as a rebuff by the bank's shareholders. Under German corporate governance rules, a chief executive can only move directly "upstairs" to a supervisory board if the support of holders of at least 25 per cent of the shares is obtained at an annual meeting.

Deutsche – which has no large anchor shareholders to support Mr Ackermann's bid – has now abandoned attempts to win this backing.

Mr Ackermann, 63, said: "The extremely challenging market conditions on the international financial markets and in the political-regulatory environment demand my full attention . . . this does not allow enough scope for the many talks with individual shareholders necessary to implement the original plan."

Jürgen Fitschen and Anshu Jain, longstanding lieutenants of Mr Ackermann, were named in July as incoming co-chief executives to succeed him.

Separately on Monday, Deutsche acknowledged that Mr Ackermann's Frankfurt offices had been raided by German prosecutors investigating the chief executive over allegations of false testimony in a legal battle with a former bank client.

Some former executives have also been targeted by the probe into alleged attempts to pervert the course of justice. Deutsche rejected the allegations and condemned prosecutors' actions as disproportionate.

The investigation and raids are connected with a complex and long-running lawsuit against the bank by Leo Kirch, a media entrepreneur who died this year. In a court case that has outlasted the man who brought it, Kirch claims Rolf Breuer, Mr Ackermann's predecessor as chief executive, contributed to his group's insolvency with public comments in 2002 that questioned his creditworthiness.

Mr Ackermann and certain former Deutsche executive board members testified in May in the civil suit brought by Kirch against Mr Breuer. They were asked about the discussion at a management board meeting of the bank, which took place in 2002 shortly before Mr Breuer's statements about Kirch.

"Deutsche Bank rejects the Munich prosecutors' allegations as baseless and their conduct as disproportionate. The bank is convinced that the allegations now raised, as in all previous proceedings to do with the Kirch issue, will be proved to be unfounded," the bank said.

Munich prosecutors did not name Mr Ackermann or others, saying only that several people were under investigation on suspicion of attempts to pervert the course of justice, and that searches had taken place at a bank in Frankfurt.

The proceedings involving Kirch have been a thorn in Deutsche's side for years and the bank's sensitivity over the suit even contributed to an embarrassing episode when the bank spied on a shareholder to see whether he had any links to Kirch.