



ROZA OTUNBAYEVA | Former President of the Kyrgyz Republic

Roza Otunbayeva became the interim president of Kyrgyz Republic and Central Asia's first female leader in April 2010 after a popular uprising in her country. Under her leadership, Kyrgyzstan drafted a new constitution, established a parliamentary system of government and held fair elections that set an important democratic precedent for the region. Mme Otunbayeva's term in office ended in December 2011, following presidential elections which she did not contest. That same year, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented Mme Otunbayeva with the prestigious US State Department International Women of Courage award, in recognition of her leadership at a very difficult transition period in the Kyrgyz Republic. At present, Mme Otunbayeva leads an international foundation called The Initiatives of Roza Otunbayeva.

Mme Otunbayeva has had a long and distinguished career as a diplomat, politician, academic and a parliamentarian. Her diplomatic career began in the late 1980s when she served as the Vice Chair of the Kyrgyz Soviet Council of Ministers, Executive Secretary of the Soviet Union's Foreign Ministry and head of the Soviet Delegation to UNESCO in Paris, and later as the Soviet Ambassador to Malaysia. When Kyrgyzstan gained independence in 1991, she became both Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, positions she held until 1992 when she became her country's first ambassador to the United States and Canada. She returned to her post as Foreign Minister in 1994, remaining there for three years. From 1997 to 2002, she served as the first Kyrgyz Ambassador to the United Kingdom. From 2002 to 2004, she served as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

When she returned home in 2004, Mme Otunbayeva became active in politics and was one of the key figures in the "tulip revolution" in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, which led to the overthrow of then President Askar Akayev. That same year she was appointed to the post of Foreign Minister by President Bakiyev. She resigned from his government in 2007 and joined the parliamentary group of the opposition Social Democratic Party in the Jogorku Kenesh—the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan. Mme Otunbayeva led the Social Democratic Party until April 2010, when following the revolution she was selected by opposition leaders as the head of the interim government.

Mme Otunbayeva graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Moscow State University in 1972. Before beginning her diplomatic career, she held posts at Kyrgyz State National University as a senior professor and head of the philosophy department for six years. She speaks Kyrgyz, Russian and English as well as some German and French. Mme Otunbayeva was born on August 23, 1950 and has two children.