

Roza Otunbayeva

(unofficial CV)

Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva (born August 23, 1950) is the President of Kyrgyzstan. She was sworn in on July 3, 2010, after acting as interim leader following the 2010 April revolution which led to the ousting of then President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. She is a former foreign minister and head of the parliamentary group of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan.

Otunbayeva is the first female President of a CIS/SCO member state.

Early life

Ms Otunbayeva was born in Osh, into the family of Isaac Otunbayev, a member of the Supreme Court of Kyrgyz SSR. She graduated from the Philosophy Faculty of Moscow State University in 1972 and went on to teach as senior professor and head of the philosophy department at Kyrgyz State National University for six years. In 1975 she became Candidate of Sciences after defending dissertation named "Critique of falsification of Marxist-Leninist dialectic by the philosophers of Frankfurt school". Otunbayeva is a divorced mother of two children. She is fluent in Russian and can speak English, German and French in addition to Kyrgyz.

Political career

In 1981, she began her political career as the Communist Party's second secretary of the Lenin raion council (*raikom*) of Frunze (current Bishkek). In late 1980s, she served as head of the USSR Delegation to UNESCO in Paris, and later as the Soviet Ambassador to Malaysia. By 1992, the now independent Kyrgyzstan was led by Askar Akayev, who chose her to be both Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, positions she held until later that year when she became her country's first ambassador to the USA and Canada. She returned to her original post in 1994, remaining there for 3 years. In 1998-2001, she served as the first Kyrgyz ambassador to the United Kingdom. In 2002-2004, she was the deputy head of the United Nations special mission to Georgia.

Upon her return to Kyrgyzstan in late 2004, Ms Otunbayeva became politically active. In December 2004, she and three other opposition parliamentarians founded the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland) party in preparation for the February 2005 parliamentary elections.

She was barred from becoming a candidate for the 2005 legislative election due to a previously enacted law requiring prospective MPs to have resided in the country for 5 years prior to the elections. Her time as ambassador to the United Kingdom prevented her from meeting this criterion. She met this requirement in 2010, so she was eligible to run for the post.

"Tulip Revolution"

Ms Otunbayeva was one of the key leaders of the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan which led to the overthrow of President Akayev. Subsequently she served for a few months as Acting Foreign Minister in the interim government of then prime minister (and acting president) Kurmanbek Bakiyev. After Bakiyev was elected President and Feliks Kulov became Prime Minister, Ms Otunbayeva failed to receive the required parliamentary support to become Foreign Minister. She then ran unsuccessfully in a parliamentary by-election a few months later. Ms Otunbayeva played a key role in November 2006 protests that pressed successfully for a new democratic constitution.

She was the co-chairwoman of the country's Asaba (Flag) National Revival Party for a short term.

In December 2007, Ms Otunbayeva was elected to Jogorku Kenesh - the parliament of Kyrgyzstan - on the candidate list of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan. She served as the head of the parliamentary group of the opposition SDP beginning in October 2009.

2010 uprising and presidency

On April 7, 2010, Ms Otunbayeva was selected by opposition leaders as head of a Kyrgyz interim government, following widespread rioting in Bishkek and the ousting of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

Bakiyev fled the Jalal-Abad area as the riots became more violent. Unable to rally support, he signed a resignation as president and on April 10, 2010 and left the country for Kazakhstan. Nine days later he went to Minsk, Belarus, where he was given protected-exile status. On April 21 he recanted his resignation and declared that he was still president of Kyrgyzstan. Ms Otunbayeva vowed to bring him to trial.

As interim president Ms Otunbayeva has four deputies. Ms Otunbayeva is considered to be unusual as there are few women in politics in Kyrgyzstan. Her first conversation after she came to power was with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Ms Otunbayeva has declared that new elections will be called in six months and that she will act as president until then.

With violent protests in support of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev continuing in Jalalabad, the home city of the former President, it was announced on May 19, 2010, by the interim government that elections will be delayed until 2011 and that Otunbayeva was named as President.

Following a referendum of the new Kyrgyz constitution Ms Otunbayeva was officially sworn in on July 3, 2010. She is however prohibited from running in the 2011 presidential election and her term will end on December 31, 2011. The referendum was supported by over 90% and changes the government from a Presidential republic to a Parliamentary republic. Parliamentary elections will be held in October and that Parliament will appoint the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Until then Ms Otunbayeva remains head of the government.