

## **Smt. Margaret Alva**

Elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1974, Margaret Alva served four consecutive six-year terms in that House, before she was elected to Lok Sabha in 1999.

In 1984, Margaret Alva was appointed Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs in the Rajiv Gandhi Government, later moving to the Ministry of Human Resource Development in charge of Youth Affairs and Sports, Women and Child Development. In 1991 she was appointed Union Minister of State for Personnel, Pension, Public Grievances and Administrative Reforms (attached to the Prime Minister) where she initiated the process of administrative decentralization, taking governance to the grass roots. She also served as Minister for Science & Technology for a brief period.

A Distinguished Parliamentarian, Smt. Margaret Alva has during her 30 years in the Indian Parliament, served on some of Parliament's most prestigious committees viz., the Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU), the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Transport, Science & Technology and Environment & Forests, and all the four major Committees that involved women's rights viz the Dowry Prohibition Act (Amendment) Committee, the Marriage Laws (Amendment) Committee, the Equal Remuneration Review Committee and the 84th Constitution Amendment bill Joint Select Committee for 33% reservation for women in local bodies. She served as Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women from 1999-2004.

In 1986, she was elected Chairperson of the first SAARC Ministerial meet on Women in Development and the UNICEF sponsored Conference on Children in South Asia which highlighted the plight of the girl-child and led to the SAARC Heads of Government declaring 1987 as "The Year of Girl-Child". In 1989, she presided over a core group appointed by the Government of India to draft a Perspective Plan for Women to detail development strategies for Women, which has since served as the blue print for policies adopted by the Central and State Governments.

She has represented India at all the major UN Conferences during the Decade for Women. Elected President of the World Women Parliamentarians for Peace (WWPP) in 1986, she was part of the delegation that petitioned Disarmament at the historic Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Washington. In 1989, she was invited by the UN Women's Division to chair the Group of Experts Meeting to assess the impact of the Decade for Women in decision making and again in 1989 on Violence against Women. In 1992, she was elected President of the ESCAP meet on Violence against Women in Seoul, South Korea and in 1994 she was invited to the Eminent Persons Meet organised by ESCAP in Bangkok. She was part of the national delegation to the UN General Assembly in 1976 and 1997, was an elected Member of the Governing Council of the Society for International Development (SID), Rome, and served on its Executive for three years. She served as a Member of the Special Advisory Group of UNFPA set up to re-orient Population Policies as follow up to the Cairo Conference and was part of the Commonwealth Observers Team for the National election in Cameroon in 1997. She has represented India at meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women at the U.N. In 1999, she served on the Expert Group set up by UNICEF to draft a country code on the Rights of the child. She served on the National Committee for Child Labour and was Vice Chairperson of the National Children's Board.

She was member of the delegation accompanying the then President Giani Zail Singh to Mauritius; member of the delegation accompanying the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to the Soviet Union; member of the delegation accompanying the then Prime Minister P.V.Narsaimha Rao to the World Social Summit, Copenhagen, and member of the delegation accompanying the then Vice President Shri K.R. Narayanan to Australia.

Margaret Alva is a lawyer by profession and practiced with her husband Shri Niranjana Alva in the Supreme Court. Widely travelled in India and abroad, Margaret Alva has lectured at Harvard and Columbia Universities and on several other prestigious platforms.

Founder President of KARUNA an NGO working for women and children which has been involved in training women elected to local bodies; organising Self Help groups for Economic empowerment and providing free legal aid and counselling centres to Women in Distress.

In recognition of her contribution to National Development, Margaret Alva was conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Literature by the University of Mysore. She is also the recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award for her achievements in public life. She was honoured by the President of South Africa H.E. Thabo Mbeki during his visit to India, for support to the African National Congress during their struggle for freedom. Recipient of the First Nelson Mandela Award for minority Empowerment awarded by the International Foundation for Minority Empowerment (with consultative status with the UN) at a ceremony at the UN Church Centre in New York, in March 2007, she was honoured at the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC with the Global Leadership award by Vital Voices Global Partnership – headed by Senator Hillary Clinton.

She served as Coordinator in the Congress President's office for two years and was General Secretary of the Indian National Congress from 2004-2009. She was earlier National Convenor of the Mahila Congress (the Women's wing of the Indian National Congress).

She served as Advisor to the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training, Lok Sabha Secretariat from 2004 to 2009. She was appointed Governor of the State of Uttarakhand in July 2009 for a five year term and took oath on 6th August 2009.

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