



Ambassador Colette Avital

Israeli diplomat, politician and activist

Born in Rumania, Colette Avital immigrated to Israel at the age of 10. After her army service she joined the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, while still completing her BA in Political Science and English Literature at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Colette Avital subsequently held a variety of key Foreign Ministry posts, including Deputy Director of Information (1979-1981) Director of the Training Division and head of Ehud Avriel school of Diplomacy (1984-1986) and Deputy Director General for Information, Media Communication and Culture (1986-1988).

She led the Ministry's efforts to upgrade the status of women in Diplomatic Service.

Ambassador Avital's distinguished record of foreign postings includes Montreal (as Chancellor) Brussels (Press and Cultural Attache) Paris (as Minister-Counselor) Boston (Consul) and Lisbon (as Ambassador). In 1992 Colette Avital was appointed Consul General of Israel in New York with the rank of Ambassador, the highest position attained by a woman in the Foreign Service. From 1997 to 1999 Ambassador Avital was Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry in charge of European Affairs. In January 1999 she turned to politics, and won, in the primaries of the Labour Party a seat on the Labour list for the Knesset. She has served in the 15th Knesset in the Education, Law and Constitution, Defense and Foreign Affairs and The Status of Women Committees. She has also been the Head of the Ethics Committee.

In the 16th Knesset, M.K Avital served as Chairperson of Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs Committee. In the year 2000 M.K Avital formed an Inquiry Committee for the Location and Restitution of the Assets of Holocaust Victims. The Committee published its report in 2005. Subsequently a law that she initiated created a State Company for the restitution of these assets. In the 17th Knesset, M.K. Avital served as Deputy- Speaker of the Knesset, and was a member of the Constitution and Law Committee, the Knesset Committee and the Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Committee.

Colette Avital holds an M.A. degree in English Literature from the Universite de Montreal, an MPA degree from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and Honorary Doctoral degrees from the College of New Rochelle and Welsley College.

She has been awarded the Palmes Academiques and subsequently La Legion d'honneur by the French Government; the Cavaliere del'ordine della Republica by the Italian Government and the National Order for Merit with the rank of High Officer by the Rumanian Government; on 11.06.13 colette received the highest decoration given by portugal: Gran Cruz do Infante Dom Henrique.

Avital served as Director General of the Berl Katznelson Foundation's Ideological and Educational Center; as International Secretary of the Israel Labour Party. Between 1999 and 2016 ehe served as the Chairperson of the Schechter Institute of Studies

Today Colette Avital serves as the Chairperson of the Center Organization of Holocaust survivors in Israel. Her public activities include: Member of the Board of the Schechter Institute; Member of the Board of the Mitvim Academic Institute; Member of the Board of the Ramat Gan College; international Secretary of the Meretz Party, and Vice President of the Socialist International; Chairperson of the International Harp Contest as well as the Zimrya (International Festival of Choirs); member of the board of the Gesher Theatre.