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Let them eat cake

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More than 150 lawyers and academics from law firms across the CIS have converged on a plush hotel in Kiev for the fourth annual CIS LocalCounsel Forum. This blog will report direct from the conference.

**Opera Hotel, Kiev, Thursday morning, 11.30am
CIS Local Counsel Forum, 24 - 26 June.**



Friendly handshakes and smiles all round as the biggest legal get-together in the CIS hits its second day. After arriving yesterday evening a tad befuddled after *The Lawyer Awards*, it was a pleasure to be greeted in such an inviting atmosphere.

With a turbulent political past, the countries represented here are linked historically and economically. However, some of these legal markets are more developed than others, so it could not be more fitting that Kiev plays host, with revolution still in the air and plenty of optimism on the faces of Ukrainian lawyers at the opening reception.

There was also something else on their faces too, as everyone tucked into a giant, delicious cake to coos of approval from all. My congratulations to the chef.

Familiar names from the UK have made the trip, including John Wittaker (Clyde & Co), and Glen Flannery (Nabarro), to name a few.

They come on the back of this event's reputation, which is largely down to its organiser Irina Paliashvili.

There is no doubt that Irina, who opened today's first seminar with a rousing speech, is the Grande Dame of the CIS legal market. With her strong links to Washington and the Obama administration, passion for the CIS legal community and self-confessed love of Ukraine, this Georgian-born managing partner draws compliments from all the delegates.

I wouldn't be surprised if Irina had baked the cake from the night before, such is her reputation in this part of the world.

During her opening remarks, Irina speaks of the recession being a much-needed "cold shower" for Ukraine's lawyers. "It was too easy in the boom time," she says.

"But we don't want the cold shower to turn into a cold bath," she adds, insisting that the forum would not be infected by doom and gloom. Cue long applause.

I'm still thinking about that cake...

Quote of the day

An exchange with a short US lawyer whose stock-in-trade is "suing oligarchs":

"You're brave!"

"I'm small. They shoot, but they miss."

Other points of note...

There are lawyers here from both sides of the [Telenor/Aphagroup dispute](#). There is no love lost between them, and there could be fireworks when the vodka arrives (frequently and in huge quantities I've been warned).

Finally, there is much giddy talk of Friday night's closing party: a 60s themed disco at a Kiev nightclub. I'm cursing because I forgot to pack my beehive.

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