

ISUS NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF URBAN SCIENCES – UNIVERSITY OF SEOUL



NEW BEGINNING YEAR 2026

"FROM WINTER STILLNESS TO GENTLE GROWTH"

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 - ★ **Bon Voyage Party**
A Night to Remember
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ISUS 101st Urban Infra Forum

*His Excellency Lee Myung-Bak, Recognised
As A Leader Who "Get Things Done"*

As a graduate of the University of Seoul, you have likely experienced first-hand how efficient Seoul's public transportation system is, especially the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) style median bus lanes. This system makes moving around the city fast, reliable, and well connected between major urban areas. Since the landmark bus reform launched in 2004, Seoul's bus system has remained strong and effective for over two decades. The reform reshaped bus operations, introduced an integrated fare system, and created dedicated median lanes. These changes positioned Korea as a global leader in urban mobility. Today, Korea does not only benefit locally from this success but also actively shares its expertise worldwide, creating economic and knowledge ripple effects through international cooperation and mobility export initiatives.

Seoul's urban transformation story would not be complete without the Cheonggyecheon Stream Restoration Project. Once a heavily congested roadway, Cheonggyecheon Stream has been transformed into one of Seoul's most iconic public spaces. Over the decades, it has attracted millions of visitors from around the world. The project shows how urban revitalization can become a major tourist attraction while also providing green space and reducing the urban heat island effect.

Beyond its visual appeal, Cheonggyecheon Stream has delivered strong ecological benefits. The restored stream has encouraged the natural return of plants, fish, birds, and insects to the city center proving that environmental recovery and urban life can thrive together.



Behind these success stories stands a decisive leader who made them possible. On 10 December 2025, ISUS hosted its 101st Urban Infrastructure Forum at the Main Hall of the Natural Science Building, featuring Lee Myung-bak, the 17th President of the Republic of Korea, as the keynote speaker. Known as a leader who “gets things done,” President Lee played a key role in turning bold policies into real outcomes, particularly through the bus reform and the Cheonggyecheon restoration.

In his lecture, “Seoul’s Bus Reform and the Cheonggyecheon Restoration: Achievements and Lessons Learned,” President Lee reflected on the challenges and decisions behind these transformative projects. He shared how his early work experience overseas in construction and shipyards helped shape his leadership approach later in life.

President Lee also spoke about learning from global best practices, taking calculated financial risks, and bringing in technical expertise from a French company who designed and supplied the smart bus shelters during the reform. Within just six months, he and his team succeeded in aligning all stakeholders around a shared vision for long-term impact. Although both projects initially faced strong resistance and public opposition, they have since become resilient urban legacies now enjoyed by generations and recognized as symbols of sustainable urban development.



During the forum, ISUS graduates were given the opportunity to ask meaningful questions, including what it takes to succeed as a leader. Even in the first meeting, Former President Lee’s presence and conviction made it clear why he was able to push through difficult and unpopular decisions, qualities that today’s world needs more than ever. (N.J. Nash)



Bon Voyage Party: A Night to Remember



On December 5, 2025, the dormitory's shared kitchen was filled with laughter, music, and heartfelt moments as cross-program students under the International Urban Development Program (IUDP) came together for a "Bon Voyage Party." The gathering was held to celebrate the journey and achievements of our beloved seniors from MGLEP 10, MUD 8, and MUDSIP 7, who had successfully completed their master's studies and soon will return to their home countries.



This memorable evening was warmly hosted by Regina Pinta Roatur (MGLEP 11) and Benjo Emmanuel Sargado (MUD 8), with activities that invited everyone to participate like karaoke sessions and interactive games. Students from different countries shared songs and dances inspired by their cultures, turning the space into a vibrant mosaic of traditions and stories.



Beyond the performances, the event reminded us of the friendships we built, the differences we learned to appreciate, and the memories that will continue to connect us across borders. The evening became a beautiful celebration of togetherness and diversity. It was not just a farewell, but a celebration of shared experiences and lasting bonds that will remain long after the night ended. (R.R)





From Concept to Clarity: Global Project Development (GPD) Final Presentations

From December 4 (Week 1) through December 18 (Week 3), approximately 24 student groups presented their Global Project Development (GPD) proposals. The presentations reflected the participants' passion and commitment, covering diverse themes such as transportation, waste management, water sustainability, smart eco-villages, river restoration, solar energy, and other urban development initiatives.

Within the 13-minute timeframe, each group clearly presented their project brief, situation analysis, policy alignment, project design, and cost-benefit analysis. Beyond well-structured and evidence-based slides, the sessions came alive through creative expression, vibrant visuals, cultural elements reflected in attire, engaging delivery styles with light humour, AI-assisted videos, and graphic mock-ups that brought ideas closer to reality.



At the end of each week, participants voted for the most popular projects. Six teams were selected as the Weekly Groups of Choice:

- Wastebusters – Establishing an e-Waste Recycling Center in Astana;
- 도약 (LEAP) – Enhancing Coffee Value Chain Through Farm Feeder Road Rehabilitation in Mbala District, Uganda;
- No Jam Traffic – Intelligent Bus Shelter for Digitally Connected Smart Cities: In the Case of Addis Ababa City;
- TAKA SAFI – Nairobi, Dandora Dumpsite Redevelopment Installing a Smart Waste Collection;
- Guatemala Team – Transforming La Aurora International Airport to the New Urban Metropolitan Park, Guatemala; and
- Urban Renew ALL – Urban Regeneration of Islamabad.



More than a series of presentations, the GPD sessions became a meaningful platform for collaboration and connection. Working across cultures, disciplines, and perspectives, students learned not only how to design impactful urban projects, but also how to communicate, compromise, and grow together. Through shared challenges and collective achievements, the GPD project fostered lasting bonds, reminding participants that one of the most valuable outcomes are often the relationships built along the way. (R.R)



MVIP MGLEP Awards 2025

Global Project Development through The Lens of Environment

On December 22, 2025, the MVIP MGLEP Awards Ceremony was held at the Centennial Memorial Hall, University of Seoul. This distinguished event recognized MGLEP student teams evaluated through the intensive Global Project Development (GPD) course, which emphasizes understanding development projects through an environmental lens. The ceremony highlighted the importance of integrating environmental considerations into development planning, reinforcing the idea that sustainable development cannot be separated from environmental responsibility.



The MVIP Awards celebrate GPD teams with MGLEP representation that demonstrated exceptional performance throughout the project, reflecting innovation, strategic thinking, and strong practical application. Organized by the MGLEP sponsor KECI (Korea Environmental Conservation Institute), the ceremony featured project evaluations conducted by a panel of experts who assessed each team's proposals and presentations, providing professional insights and scores based on clearly defined criteria.



The top-performing teams were awarded Gold, Silver, and Bronze distinctions and received Onnuri Gift Certificates, certificates of participation, and bouquets of flowers in recognition of their achievements. The award recipients were:

- Gold Award: Taka Safi – Nairobi Dandora Dumpsite Redevelopment.
- Silver Award: Axentra Solution – Sustainable e-Mobility for Konza Technopolis.
- Bronze Award: Team Smart Resilience 5 – A Resilient Water Distribution Through Smart and Real-Time Systems: The Case of Koforidua.

In addition, six teams were honored with the Excellence Effort Award, each receiving an Onnuri Gift Certificate in recognition of their dedication, teamwork, and commitment to developing environmentally responsible and impactful development projects. (R.R)

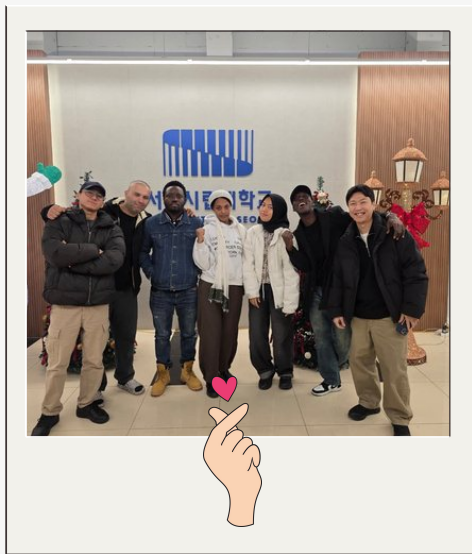


ISUS 2025 Graduates Send-Off

Goodbye, my friend... it's not the end..." a line from the Spice Girls' song "Goodbye" reminds us that farewells are not true separations, but the beginning of carrying one another in our hearts.

From 13-31 December 2025, ISUS 2025 graduates began returning to their home countries one by one, marking both an ending and a new beginning. Each departure was filled with unspoken emotions, held-back tears, warm embraces, and final words exchanged at the very last moment. Friends and juniors waited patiently from morning until night, making sure no one left alone and that every journey home began safely.

As farewells unfolded, memories of more than one and a half years of living, learning, and growing together came rushing back, leaving behind a lingering question: *"When will we meet again?"* No one knows the answer. Yet, perhaps that uncertainty is also a source of hope. We now carry friendships that stretch across continents, turning distance and time differences into symbols of how far our shared journey has reached. Though we may be separated by borders, this togetherness remains, a quiet reminder that we were, and will always be, an important part of one another's lives. (R.R)



One Team, One Journey: ISUS Representatives Unite Across Programmes



For the first time, ISUS representatives came together on 5 December 2025 for a joint inter-programme meeting, marking a meaningful step toward stronger collaboration across programmes. Initiated entirely by the representatives themselves, this historic gathering reflected a shared desire to work more closely as one ISUS community.

During the meeting, each representative openly shared updates on their responsibilities ranging from planned activities to ongoing challenges. These honest conversations laid the foundation for better coordination, deeper understanding, and stronger cooperation among all programmes.

One of the most heartfelt agenda items was the planning of a farewell party for seniors completing their studies in December 2025. The event will be a collective effort: MGLEP will lead the invitations and main programme, MUD will organize games and interactive sessions, while other programmes will contribute to gift preparation. Each role, though different, carries the same purpose to celebrate shared memories and meaningful journeys.

The meeting unfolded in a warm and positive atmosphere, with full attendance

“This was more than a meeting, it was a moment where different programmes became one team.”

and active participation from all representatives. For those who have completed their studies, the gathering became a moment of reflection. Stories were shared of challenges faced, lessons learned, and friendships built. Photos were taken, not just as records, but as reminders of the years spent serving, learning, and growing together.

Serving as an ISUS representative is more than a title. It is a journey filled with responsibility, resilience, and heart. Beyond acting as a bridge among future global leaders, this experience shaped character and created memories that cannot be bought or replaced. As this chapter comes to a close, one thing remains clear: the bonds formed and lessons gained will stay with them long after graduation.

The meetings may conclude, but the friendships, lessons, and shared purpose remain. What began as responsibility has grown into belonging and that is a success that will last far beyond this moment. (N.J. Nash)



On 17 December 2025, the Seoul Metropolitan Government hosted the 2025 Seoul ODA Cooperation Forum at the Seoul Global Center, bringing together leading institutions, practitioners, and partners in international development. The forum served as an important platform to review Seoul's Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects and to celebrate progress while exploring new directions for future cooperation. The program featured eight presentation sessions and updates on two ongoing ODA project implementations from ISUS, reflecting the city's strong commitment to global development.

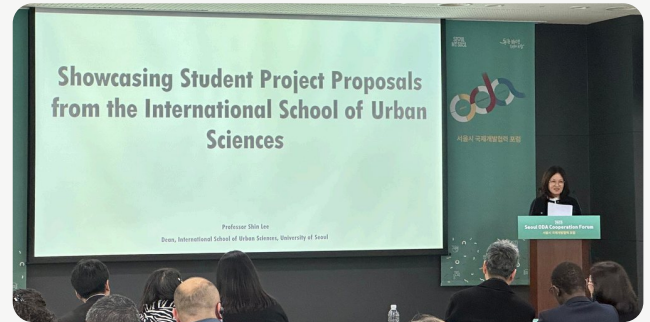
2025 Seoul Official Development Assistance (ODA) Cooperation Forum

The International Urban Development Program (IUDP) represented by students from the MGLEP and MUAP tracks was honored to participate in this prestigious forum. The sessions provided valuable insights into evolving ODA proposal trends, including a growing emphasis on strategic, flexible, and real-time project design amid tighter financial conditions. Innovative approaches in waste management integrated with artificial intelligence, along with new environmental initiatives, stood out as key growth areas for future ODA engagement. Discussions also openly addressed common challenges faced by development organizations during funding constraints, reinforcing a shared commitment to delivering high-quality, high-impact projects.

A truly proud highlight of the forum was the participation of Professor Shin Lee, Dean of the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS), University of Seoul, who took the stage as one of the featured speakers. In her session, *“Showcasing Student Project Proposals from the International School of Urban Sciences”*, she presented inspiring examples of how student ideas are transformed into impactful, real-world solutions with global relevance.

Most notably, two student-led proposals Waste-to-Energy in Konza Technopolis, Kenya, and Revitalizing Pasar Induk Kramat Jati, Indonesia were introduced as successfully funded projects. This achievement marks a major milestone for ISUS and its students, demonstrating their creativity, innovation, and readiness to contribute meaningfully to global urban development.

This moment was more than a presentation, it was a celebration of student excellence, collaboration, and the growing global impact of the ISUS community. (N.J. Nash)



Seoul Climate Tech B2G Matching Day

Connecting Innovation with Global Need

On 19 December 2025, the Seoul Climate Tech Industry Support Center organized the Climate Tech B2G Matching Day, hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in collaboration with the University of Seoul (UOS) and the National Institute of Green Technology.

The event featured four insightful presentations by UOS graduates, highlighting climate policies and technology demands from different regions:

- Ghana’s Climate and Environment Policy and Technology Demand, Bright Annang Baah, MUDSIP 7;
- Nepal’s Climate and Environment Policies and Emerging Markets for Climate Technology Investment, Anisha Shrestha, MUDSIP 7;
- Uzbekistan’s Green Horizon: Partnership Opportunities for Korean Companies, Shakhzoda Abdurakhmanova, MUDSIP 8; and
- Indonesia’s Climate Policy and Emerging Technology Needs, Adhistry Manan, MUDSIP 7.



In addition, three climate technology companies presented innovative solutions designed to address global climate challenges. The showcased technologies focused on disaster early-warning systems, clean drinking water supply, and environmental waste management.

Through this B2G matching session, participating companies gained valuable insights into the real challenges faced by countries worldwide and explored how their climate technologies and services could be effectively aligned with international needs. The event fostered meaningful collaboration and reinforced the role of innovation in advancing global climate action.



These discussions showed how important it is to connect government policy needs with practical climate innovations and key takeaways:

- The Climate Tech B2G Matching Day strengthened collaboration between government, academia, and industry.
- Innovative solutions were showcased in disaster early-warning, clean water supply, and waste management technologies.
- UOS graduates and climate tech companies demonstrated solutions with strong international application potential.
- The matching session enabled companies to align their technologies with practical, real-world climate challenges.

The event highlighted the importance of B2G partnerships in accelerating global climate action. (N.J. Nash).



Christmas: A Season of Joy and Togetherness

Christmas is more than a date for religious celebration, it is a season of faith, reflection, and togetherness. It carries a timeless message of love, hope, and compassion. It is also a moment that invites people to slow down, open their hearts, and reconnect with one another especially when far from home.

On 25 December 2025, ISUS students from different programmes came together as Eagles F.C., uniting as one community to celebrate a Christmas Tea Gathering. Following the Christmas service at Seongdeok Church, members gathered at a nearby café to continue the celebration in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The gathering was filled with simple joys sharing pizza and drinks, engaging in light-hearted conversations, and exchanging small gifts. More than just a casual get-together, the

event created a safe space of comfort and companionship, easing the loneliness often felt during the festive season, particularly for those celebrating Christmas away from their families.

Surrounded by love, joy, laughter, and togetherness, the gathering truly reflected the spirit of family and faith. It served as a meaningful reminder that even when far from home, no one walks alone. Through shared moments and sincere connections, the true essence of Christmas came alive.

“For those journeying far from home, Christmas reminds us that home is not only a place, but the people who walk beside us. May this season renew your faith, strengthen your spirit, and reassure you that wherever you are, you are never alone.” (N.J. Nash)



Alum of the ^{☆☆} Month: ☆ ☆☆ Kenneth Tabliga ☆☆ Almarines (MGLEP 4)

Kenneth Tabliga Almarines, an alumna of the MGLEP Class of 4, is currently serving as Officer-in-charge of the Forest Resources Management Division at the Forest Management Bureau under the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). As a forestry professional deeply engaged in national forest policy and sustainable resource management, she continues to apply the knowledge and global perspective gained during her time at ISUS to her work in environmental governance and international cooperation.

Could you briefly introduce your current role at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the main responsibilities you are currently handling?

Mabuhay! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be interviewed for the newsletter. I am Kenneth Tabliga Almarines from Quezon City, Philippines. I am a Forester by profession and currently serving as the Officer-in-charge of the Forest Resources Management Division under the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

I supervise a 40-staff division and oversee the day-to-day operations related to forest resource assessment, forest tenure instrument management and monitoring, and policy support. Our work includes strengthening forest land-use planning, supporting sustainable forest management initiatives, and providing technical inputs for national forestry programs, climate change mitigation strategies, and biodiversity conservation policies.



Working in the forestry and environment sector is truly rewarding. I collaborate with various stakeholders, national government agencies, local governments, communities, and development partners, in addressing issues on forest protection, rehabilitation, and sustainable utilization. Forests are among the Philippines' most valuable natural resources, and I aim to contribute to evidence-based policy reforms and improved program implementation toward achieving sustainable forest management and long-term environmental resilience in the country.

Congratulations on your recent promotion. Do you see any connection between your professional growth and what you learned during your time in the MGLEP program at ISUS?

There is a strong connection between my professional growth and my experience in the MGLEP Program at ISUS. The program expanded my knowledge, strengthened my analytical and leadership skills, and enhanced my competencies in policy development, institutional planning, and sustainable development for the environment and natural resources sector.

My academic journey in Korea was a tremendous step in my professional development. It exposed me to interdisciplinary and international policy perspectives, which helped broaden my understanding of environmental governance, strategic planning, and results-based public service.

Since graduating from ISUS, I have remained in the same organization and was promoted. My learnings from the MGLEP Program have helped me introduce new ideas, technologies, and skill sets to my colleagues, particularly in policy analysis, planning systems, and the use of data and geospatial tools in forest management. These experiences have strengthened my ability to contribute to institutional reforms and national forestry policy initiatives within the DENR.



In the field of forest and environmental policy, are there any Korean policies, approaches, or experiences that you find particularly relevant or inspiring for the Philippines? How do you see potential for future learning or cooperation?

Korea's experience in forest rehabilitation and long-term forest planning is particularly inspiring for the Philippines. Its successful post-war reforestation program demonstrates how strong political will, science-based planning, sustained financing, and community participation can restore degraded forest landscapes at a national scale.

I am also impressed by Korea's integration of digital technologies, geospatial information systems, and data-driven monitoring in forest management and land-use planning. These approaches are highly relevant to the Philippines as we strengthen our national forest inventory system, forest land-use planning, and climate change mitigation and adaptation programs under the DENR.

There is strong potential for deeper DENR–Korea cooperation in areas such as forest monitoring technologies, climate-smart forestry, ecosystem restoration, and policy research. Knowledge-exchange programs, joint research initiatives, technical training, and institutional partnerships between Korean agencies and Philippine institutions could significantly enhance our shared goals of sustainable forest management, carbon sequestration, and environmental resilience. Such collaboration would also support the Philippines in meeting its international commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.



Lastly, is there any message you would like to share with the ISUS community, including current students and fellow alumni?

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to ISUS for the opportunity to be part of the MGLEP Program. The education, international exposure, and professional networks I gained during my stay in Korea remain among the most valuable experiences of my career in public service.

To the current students, I encourage you to maximize your time at ISUS by engaging deeply in your studies, research, and cross-cultural learning. The knowledge, discipline, and networks you build here will be powerful tools in shaping evidence-based policies and development programs in your home countries.

To my fellow alumni, let us continue to strengthen our connections and collaborate across borders. We share a common responsibility to contribute to sustainable development, good governance, and environmental protection. I hope we can further promote institutional partnerships and policy dialogue between our countries, particularly between Korea and the Philippines, in advancing sustainable forest management and climate action. I am proud to be part of the ISUS community, and I look forward to future opportunities for cooperation and shared learning.





ENJOYING WINTER SEASON!





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