

of aluminum cans, 59% of cullet, and 50% of paper is recycled. These numbers compare very favourably with those in other G-7 nations.

Forests

Forests are one of the earth's most important renewable and multifaceted resources. They act as CO₂ sinks, habitats for biological diversity, and provide both protection of the watershed and soil cover. They are also a source of many raw materials. This makes them an important economic resource, particularly in developing countries.

Problems associated with increasing deforestation once again illustrate the need to balance environmental protection and economic development. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) attempts to affect such a balance through the promotion of sustainable development and forest conservation. The World Bank, and other international agencies, is attempting to address, through financial measures, the problem of deforestation.

The idea of a Forest convention, the purpose of which is to protect tropical and temperate forests, was first endorsed at the G-7 summit in Houston in 1990. However, the difficult process of international negotiation, and the

resistance of countries dependent on forestry for their development, has made apparent the difficulties inherent in striking an acceptable, legally binding charter.

Recognizing this, Japan has proposed that a non-legally binding international charter for the protection of the world's forests be discussed as part of the UNCED process. It is Japan's position that such an agreement would serve as an important first step in assuring sustainable development of the world's forest resources. At the same time, it would respect the sovereign rights of developing countries that may depend heavily upon the development of forest resources.

Biological Diversity

Despite ongoing negotiations, considerable division remains between developed and developing countries on issues related to maintaining and protecting biological diversity. There is, however, some hope that by focusing on issues where agreement might be reached during the UNCED process, such as the establishment of protected areas, negotiators might be able to develop mechanisms for addressing other problems as well.

While biological diversity conventions are