The chapter examines the position of SMPs after critical phases of regime formation to demonstrate how these states rapidly adjust their diplomacies to new conventions of global governance. SMPs are inclined to emerge as forerunners of the mission envisioned in new conventions because they pragmatically recognise the need to maximise their influence within existing frameworks rather than pursue revisionist agendas. They will therefore prefer to enhance the developmental objectives of newly formed frameworks and work from within the system, rather than seek the abolition of these frameworks and the establishment of alternative ones. This is not only because of their incapacity at promoting radical restructuring but also because of their unwillingness to upset existing agreements and cause disorder in global governance. In their efforts at benefiting from newly established conventions, SMPs will take advantage of agreed commitments and responsibilities to pursue a more offensive coalition-building approach to secure the developmental provisions that are proposed by new conventions. While SMPs may pursue assertive bargaining tactics, their aim is not to cause deadlock in international institutions since they always retain a fundamental commitment to the stability of global governance.

3.1 Readjusting to the DDA

After Doha, India and South Africa faced the challenge of re-adjusting their WTO diplomacy within the new framework of negotiations set by the DDA. An examination of the two states’ position in the WTO after Doha reveals the willingness of both states to accept the negotiating mandate of the DDA as the legitimate framework for achieving progress in WTO negotiations. At this stage, both countries emerged as strong
advocates of the DDA and its potential to redefine the relationship between trade and development. This process of re-adjustment was more evident for India, which had previously acted as the leader of the opposition against the new round. South Africa, however, also shifted its approach to support the developmental aspects of the DDA. Both states therefore followed a parallel course in theirendeavour to adjust to the norms, values and principles of the DDA and re-formulated their bargaining strategies in accordance with the objectives set in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). India and South Africa were active in different bodies of the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC), the new body that was established at the Doha ministerial and that involved seven specialised committees.

India’s newfound support for the DDA was evident in two bodies of the TNC: the Negotiating Group on Market Access (NGMA) and the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD). In the NGMA, India proposed that negotiations would now have to be based not only on the GATT but also on the work programme of the Doha Declaration (WTO, TN/MA/M/2, p. 9). The Indian delegation noted that the DDA had clearly instructed WTO members to take into full account the developmental needs of weaker WTO members. Negotiations in tariff reduction should be guided by the principle of “less than full reciprocity” (WTO, TN/MA/W/10, p. 2) and allow for the creation of flexible forms of tariff protection that served the interests of LDCs (WTO, TN/MA/M/2, p. 9). Tariffs constituted a vital source of revenue for many developing countries. They should be therefore allowed to liberalise their tariffs on a basis of flexibility and non-reciprocity (WTO, TN/MA/M/6, pp. 3–4). The DDA also clearly noted that the economic progress of LDCs was interlinked with market access and the removal of trade barriers in industrialised economies (WTO, TN/MA/M/3, p. 19). In accordance with the DDA, negotiations on reducing tariffs would be effective only if they allowed for non-reciprocal commitments and targeted at products of export interest to the South (ibid, pp. 19–20; WTO, TN/MA/W/10, p. 2). Developing countries had undertaken extensive tariff cuts as a result of their UR commitments. Tariffs in the North, however, remained high in various products of interest to developing countries, such as textiles and clothing, and rubber (WTO, TN/MA/W/10, p. 1; WTO, TN/MA/W/10/Add.1, p. 1). Only such a platform of tariff liberalisation would reflect the principles outlined in the Doha Declaration.

The Indian delegation requested the NGMA to establish market access formulas that abided by the guiding principles of the DDA (WTO, TN/MA/M/3, p. 19). The Indian delegation noted that WTO members,