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Subject: (Reuters) China says Britain sowing discord in climate politics

BEIJING - China condemned claims ascribed to Britain's climate change minister that it had "hijacked" negotiations in Copenhagen, saying on Tuesday the accusations were an attempt to sow discord among poor countries.

The sharp words from Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu were the latest baring of diplomatic bad blood after the talks in Copenhagen ended on Saturday with a broad, non-binding accord that fell short of hopes for a robust global agreement on how to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Jiang was responding to a report in Britain's Guardian newspaper that said the Environment Minister Ed Miliband had accused China, Sudan, Bolivia and other left-wing Latin American nations of "hijacking" efforts to reach deeper agreement on how to fight global warming.

In a separate commentary for the paper, Miliband said China vetoed a widely supported proposal at the Copenhagen talks to aim to cut global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2050.

"We cannot again allow negotiations on real points of substance to be hijacked," he also wrote, but without singling out China or any other country as a "hijacker."

Chinese spokeswoman Jiang did not chide Miliband by name, but Beijing's ire was clear.

"The statements from certain British politicians are plainly a political scheme," she said in a statement issued by the official Xinhua news agency.

"Their objective is to shirk responsibilities that should be assumed towards developing countries, and to provoke discord among developing countries. This scheme will come to nothing."

The flap is unlikely to seriously disrupt negotiations seeking to turn the Copenhagen accord into a legally binding treaty. But the sour exchange has underscored the distrust between China and rich countries that could frustrate efforts to agree on that treaty by late 2010.

"Everyone is raising the banner of protecting the planet, but in reality they are protecting their own interests," Wang Yi, a climate change policy researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, told Reuters.

"The compromises (in Copenhagen) were very, very limited."

China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases from human activities and its biggest developing economy. Other governments have pressed it to do more to reduce its growing emissions and to submit its emissions goals to international checks as part of any new climate pact.

But China and other big developing countries have accused the rich economies of failing to offer big enough cuts to their emissions, and of not offering enough money and technological help to poor countries to cope with climate change. Chinese experts have also said the goal of cutting global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2050 is empty rhetoric without those commitments from rich nations.

"Currently, the most difficult issue to resolve is the scale and structure of each country's emissions reductions," said Li Zhiqing, an environmental policy professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, writing in the city's Wenhui Daily newspaper.

"Clearly, there will be no breakthrough on this in the near term and we can only maintain the status quo," wrote Li.