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China fires back at US prez candidates

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BEIJING: Beijing urged the US presidential candidates on Tuesday to refrain from inflaming tensions with China after President Barack Obama and challenger Mitt Romney vowed to get tough with the Asian giant.

Both men vowed to be firm on China at their final presidential debate in Florida on Monday with Romney reeling off a list of alleged Chinese trade violations. "US politicians no matter from what party should view China's development in an objective and rational light and should do more for China-US mutual trust and cooperation," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said following the debate.

"The sound and steady development of China-US relations serve the fundamental interests of both countries and both peoples, it is also conducive to regional and world peace, stability and prosperity."

During the debate, Romney repeated his vow that, if elected, he would declare China to be a currency manipulator on his first day in office, charging that Beijing has kept its yuan artificially low to flood the market with cheap exports. "They're taking jobs. They're stealing our intellectual property, our patents, our designs, our technology, hacking into our computers, counterfeiting our goods," Romney said. But despite the tough talk, he discounted the possibility of provoking a trade war with Beijing should he win the November 6 vote.

Obama pledged cooperation with the rising power despite numerous trade disagreements and a gaping US trade deficit with China -- which stood at nearly \$300 billion last year. "China's an

adversary and also a potential partner in the international community if it's following the rules," Obama said at the debate in Boca Raton.

China's state press lashed out at the anti-China tone of the discussions. "Willing or not, Democratic or Republican, the next US president shall have to tone down his get-tough-on-China rhetoric made along the campaign trail," Xinhua news agency said in a commentary. It added: "Both US presidential candidates vowed at their third and last debate... that they would press Beijing to 'play by the rules' in shaping their bilateral ties. "However, their definition of 'rules of the road' is primarily pro-American."