

## Supporting Information for

# Reactivity of cyano- and isothiocyanatoborylenes: metal coordination, one-electron oxidation and boron-centred Brønsted basicity

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## Methods and materials

All manipulations were performed either under an atmosphere of dry argon or *in vacuo* using standard Schlenk line or glovebox techniques. Deuterated solvents were dried over molecular sieves and degassed by three freeze-pump-thaw cycles prior to use. All other solvents were distilled and degassed from appropriate drying agents. Both deuterated and non-deuterated solvents were stored under argon over activated 4 Å molecular sieves. NMR spectra were acquired either on a Bruker Avance 500 or a Bruker Avance 400 NMR spectrometer. Chemical shifts ( $\delta$ ) are listed in ppm and internally referenced to the carbon nuclei ( $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ ) or residual protons ( $^1\text{H}$ ) of the solvent. Heteronuclei NMR spectra are referenced to external standards ( $^{11}\text{B}$ :  $\text{BF}_3\cdot\text{OEt}_2$ ). Solid-state IR spectra were recorded on a Bruker FT-IR spectrometer ALPHA II inside a glovebox. UV-vis spectra were measured on a METTLER TOLEDO UV-vis-Excellence UV5 spectrophotometer inside a glovebox. Microanalyses (C, H, N, S) were performed on an Elementar vario MICRO cube elemental analyzer. High-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) data were obtained from a Thermo Scientific Exactive Plus spectrometer. Photoreactions were performed using a LOT-Quantum Design GmbH mercury-xenon vapor lamp (I = 19 A, U = 26 V). *Note: both elemental analyses and HRMS were carried out for all new compounds but in some cases these decomposed too rapidly and only one type of analysis was possible.*

$\text{M}(\text{CO})_6$  (M = Cr, Mo, W), PhSH, MeOTf (Tf = triflate,  $\text{O}_3\text{SCF}_3^-$ ) and AgOTf were purchased from various chemicals companies, transferred into a glovebox and used as received.  $\text{KC}_8$ ,<sup>1</sup>  $\text{IiPr}$  (= 1,3-diisopropylimidazol-2-ylidene),<sup>2</sup> CAAC (= 1-(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)-3,3,5,5-tetramethylpyrrolidin-2-ylidene),<sup>3</sup>  $(\text{CAAC})\text{BBr}_2(\text{CN})$  ( $\mathbf{1}^{\text{CN}}$ )<sup>4</sup> and  $(\text{CAAC})(\text{IiPr})\text{B}(\text{NCS})$  ( $\mathbf{2}^{\text{NCS}}$ )<sup>5</sup> were synthesised following literature procedures.

## Synthetic procedures

### **(CAAC)(iPr)B(CN), 2<sup>CN</sup>**

To a suspension of iPr (174 mg, 1.14 mmol, 2.20 equiv.) and KC<sub>8</sub> (154 mg, 1.41 mmol, 2.20 equiv.) in 5 mL of benzene a dilute solution of (CAAC)BBr<sub>2</sub>(CN) (250 mg, 0.52 mmol) in 10 mL of benzene was added dropwise under vigorous stirring. The resulting dark yellow suspension was stirred for 2 h at room temperature prior to filtration. After concentration of the filtrate to 5 mL *in vacuo*, slow evaporation of the solvent afforded 2<sup>CN</sup> (200 mg, 0.42 mmol, 81% yield) as yellow crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 7.47–7.44 (m, 1H, *p*-ArH), 7.40–7.38 (m, 2H, *m*-ArH), 6.22 (s, 2H, iPr-CH), 5.32 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.63 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.91 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.80 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.48 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.32 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.13 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.09 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.98 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.9 Hz, 6H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 151.4 (*o*-ArC), 138.1 (*i*-ArC), 128.6 (*p*-ArC), 124.8 (*m*-ArC), 116.3 (iPr-CH), 63.8 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 57.8 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.0 (iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 43.7 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 33.0 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.3 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.7 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 25.4 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.1 (iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.8 (iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. *Note: the C<sub>carbene</sub> and C<sub>CN</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC.* <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = -12.1 (s) ppm. Solid-state IR: ν(CN) = 2119 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Elemental analysis for [C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>] (M<sub>w</sub> = 474.54): calcd. C 75.93, H 9.98, N 11.81 %; found C 76.34, H 9.88, N 11.27 %.

### **(CAAC)(iPr)B(NCS)(Cr(CO)<sub>5</sub>), 2<sup>NCS</sup>-Cr**

A solution of Cr(CO)<sub>6</sub> (10.4 mg, 47.4 μmol, 1.20 equiv.) in 0.4 mL of THF was irradiated for 3 h and subsequently added to 2<sup>NCS</sup> (20.0 mg, 39.5 μmol) dissolved in 0.4 mL of THF. The colour changed instantly from orange to red. After evaporation of the solvent the residue was washed with hexane and dried *in vacuo* to afford 2<sup>NCS</sup>-Cr (23.7 mg, 34.0 μmol, 86% yield) as a brown solid. *Note: all attempts to crystallise 2<sup>NCS</sup>-Cr resulted in the recovery of 2<sup>NCS</sup>.* <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 7.35–7.28 (m, 3H, *p*-ArH, *m*-ArH), 6.10 (s, 2H, iPr-CH), 5.06 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.50 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.79 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.54 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.39 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.19 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.15 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.6 Hz, 6H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.93 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.90 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 223.8 (CO), 216.6 (CO), 149.4 (*o*-ArC), 136.9 (*i*-ArC), 129.2 (*p*-ArC), 125.0 (*m*-ArC), 116.9 (iPr-CH), 64.6 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 57.3 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.2 (iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 43.1 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 32.8 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 29.9

(NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.1 (LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 24.9 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.8 (LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.9 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. *Note: the C<sub>carbene</sub> and C<sub>NCS</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC.* <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = -3.8 (s) ppm. Solid-state IR: ν(NCS) = 2057 cm<sup>-1</sup>; ν(CO) = 2057, 1968, 1932, 1903 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Elemental analysis for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BCrN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>S] (M<sub>w</sub> = 698.65): calcd. C 60.17, H 6.78, N 8.02, S 4.59 %; found C 60.67, H 7.14, N 8.17, S 4.77 %. *Note: HMRS only provided a peak for the 2<sup>NCS</sup> borylene.*

#### (CAAC)(LiPr)B(NCS)(W(CO)<sub>5</sub>), 2<sup>NCS</sup>-W

W(CO)<sub>6</sub> (16.7 mg, 47.4 μmol, 1.20 equiv.) dissolved in 0.4 mL of THF was irradiated for 3 h and added to a solution of 2<sup>NCS</sup> (20.0 mg, 39.5 μmol) in 0.4 mL of THF. After a colour change from orange to red the solvent was removed *in vacuo*. The residue was washed with hexane and dried *in vacuo*, yielding 2<sup>NCS</sup>-W (26.9 mg, 32.4 μmol, 82% yield) as a brown solid. *Note: all attempts to crystallise 2<sup>NCS</sup>-W resulted in the recovery of 2<sup>NCS</sup>.* <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 7.35–7.28 (m, 3H, *p*-ArH, *m*-ArH), 6.13 (s, 2H, LiPr-CH), 5.05 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.49 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.78 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.53 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.38 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.18 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.13 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.92 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.91 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.9 Hz, 6H, LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 201.5 (CO), 198.8 (CO), 149.4 (*o*-ArC), 136.9 (*i*-ArC), 129.3 (*p*-ArC), 125.0 (*m*-ArC), 117.0 (LiPr-CH), 64.7 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 57.2 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.2 (LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 43.2 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 32.8 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 29.9 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.1 (LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 25.0 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.9 (LiPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.8 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. *Note: the C<sub>carbene</sub> and C<sub>NCS</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC.* <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = -3.9 (s) ppm. Solid-state IR: ν(NCS) = 2106 cm<sup>-1</sup>; ν(CO) = 2066, 1972, 1911, 1880 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Elemental analysis for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>SW] (M<sub>w</sub> = 830.49): calcd. C 50.62, H 5.70, N 6.75, S 3.86 %; found C 50.98, H 6.14, N 6.92, S 4.11 %. *Note: HMRS only provided a peak for the 2<sup>NCS</sup> borylene.*

#### (CAAC)(LiPr)B(CN)(Cr(CO)<sub>5</sub>), 2<sup>CN</sup>-Cr

A solution of Cr(CO)<sub>6</sub> (11.1 mg, 50.5 μmol, 1.20 equiv.) in 0.4 mL of THF was irradiated for 3 h and added to 2<sup>CN</sup> (20.0 mg, 42.1 μmol) dissolved in 0.4 mL of THF, whereupon the yellow colour intensified. After evaporation of the solvent the solid residue was washed with a 9:1 mixture of hexane/benzene. Drying *in vacuo* afforded 2<sup>CN</sup>-Cr (25.5 mg, 38.3 μmol, 91% yield) as a yellow solid and as the (*Z*)-isomer only. Single crystals of (*Z*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-Cr were obtained by vapour diffusion of hexane into a saturated benzene solution. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>,

297 K):  $\delta = 7.57$  (t,  $^3J = 7.7$  Hz, 1H, *p*-ArH), 7.40 (d,  $^3J = 7.7$  Hz, 1H, *p*-ArH), 6.09 (s, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 5.07 (sept,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.34 (sept,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.76 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.61 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.39 (d,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.17 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.14 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.92 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.90 (d,  $^3J = 6.9$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 220.4$  (CO), 215.4 (CO), 150.0 (*o*-ArC), 136.4 (*i*-ArC), 129.2 (*p*-ArC), 125.6 (*m*-ArC), 116.4 (*i*Pr-CH), 64.6 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 56.9 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.0 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 43.9 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 32.4 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.1 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.6 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 25.0 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.4 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.6 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. Note: the *C*<sub>carbene</sub> and *C*<sub>CN</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = -13.2$  (s) ppm. Solid-state IR:  $\nu(\text{CN}) = 2134$  cm<sup>-1</sup>;  $\nu(\text{CO}) = 2064, 1975, 1928, 1884, 1862$  cm<sup>-1</sup>. Elemental analysis for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BCrN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>] (M<sub>w</sub> = 666.59): calcd. C 63.06, H 7.11, N 8.41 %; found C 62.59, H 7.16, N 7.92 %. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BCrN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>] = [M]: calcd. 666.3039; found 666.3031.

#### (CAAC)(*i*Pr)B(CN)(Mo(CO)<sub>5</sub>), **2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo**

Mo(CO)<sub>6</sub> (13.3 mg, 50.5  $\mu\text{mol}$ , 1.20 equiv.) dissolved in 0.4 mL of THF was irradiated for 3 h and added to a solution of **2<sup>CN</sup>** (20.0 mg, 42.1  $\mu\text{mol}$ ) in 0.4 mL of THF. The yellow color intensified immediately and subsequently the solvent was evaporated. The residue was washed with a 9:1 mixture of hexane/benzene and dried *in vacuo*, yielding **2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo** (26.7 mg, 37.5  $\mu\text{mol}$ , 89% yield) as a yellow solid, in a 95:5 (*Z*)/(*E*) ratio. Single crystals of (*Z*)-**2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo** were obtained by vapor diffusion of hexane into a saturated benzene solution. NMR data for (*Z*)-**2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo**: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 7.56$  (t,  $^3J = 7.7$  Hz, 1H, *p*-ArH), 7.39 (d,  $^3J = 7.7$  Hz, 1H, *p*-ArH), 6.10 (s, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 5.06 (sept,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.34 (sept,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.76 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.60 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.38 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.17 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.12 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.92 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.90 (d,  $^3J = 6.9$  Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 212.9$  (CO), 204.9 (CO), 150.1 (*o*-ArC), 136.5 (*i*-ArC), 129.2 (*p*-ArC), 125.6 (*m*-ArC), 116.5 (*i*Pr-CH), 64.8 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 56.8 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.1 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 44.0 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 32.4 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.1 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.6 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 25.0 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.3 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.6 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. Note: the *C*<sub>carbene</sub> and *C*<sub>CN</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = -13.6$  (s) ppm. Solid-state IR:  $\nu(\text{CN}) = 2126$  cm<sup>-1</sup>;  $\nu(\text{CO}) = 2067, 1976, 1926, 1858$  cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BMoN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>] = [M]: calcd. 712.2688; found 712.2682.

**(CAAC)(iPr)B(CN)(W(CO)<sub>5</sub>), 2<sup>CN</sup>-W**

A solution of W(CO)<sub>6</sub> (17.8 mg, 50.5 μmol, 1.20 equiv.) in 0.4 mL of THF was irradiated for 3 h and added to 2<sup>CN</sup> (20.0 mg, 42.1 μmol) dissolved in 0.4 mL of THF, whereupon the yellow colour intensified. After evaporation of the solvent the residue was washed with a 9:1 mixture of hexane/benzene and dried *in vacuo*. 2<sup>CN</sup>-W was isolated as a 9:1 (Z)/(E) mixture, which isomerised to a 2:3 (Z)/(E) equilibrium ratio after heating for 10 days at 60 °C in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, as determined by NMR-spectroscopic analysis. Single crystals of (E)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W were obtained by slow evaporation of this solution. NMR data for (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 7.58 (t, <sup>3</sup>J = 7.6 Hz, 1H, *p*-ArH), 7.40 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 7.7 Hz, 2H, *m*-ArH), 6.08 (s, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 5.04 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.31 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 2H, *i*Pr-CH), 1.74 (s, 2H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.60 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.37 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.15 (s, 6H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.11 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.91 (s, 6H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.89 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.8 Hz, 6H, *i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 201.9 (CO), 197.9 (CO), 150.0 (*o*-ArC), 136.3 (*i*-ArC), 129.4 (*p*-ArC), 125.8 (*m*-ArC), 116.6 (*i*Pr-CH), 64.3 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 56.7 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 51.1 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 44.1 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 32.3 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.1 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 28.8 (*i*Pr-CH), 26.6 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 25.0 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.4 (*i*Pr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 20.6 (*i*Pr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. Note: the *C*<sub>carbene</sub> and *C*<sub>CN</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = -13.9 (s) ppm. Note: due to the very broad and partially overlapping resonances of (E)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W its <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectra were not assigned. <sup>11</sup>B NMR for (E)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = -8.4 (s) ppm. Solid-state IR: ν(CN) = 2143 ((E)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W), 2121 ((Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W) cm<sup>-1</sup>; ν(CO) = 2066, 1978, 1914, 1856 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Note: generous washing of the original 9:1 (Z)/(E) mixture of 2<sup>CN</sup>-W with a 3:2 mixture of hexane/THF and subsequent drying *in vacuo* afforded a few milligrams of pure (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W, enabling the assignment of ν(CN) in the solid-state IR spectrum. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>O<sub>5</sub>W] = [M]: calcd. 798.3143; found 798.3136.

**[(CAAC)(iPr)B(NCS)]<sup>+</sup>[OTf]<sup>-</sup>, [(Z)-2<sup>NCS+</sup>][OTf]<sup>-</sup>**

2<sup>NCS</sup> (50.0 mg, 98.7 μmol) and AgOTf (25.4 mg, 98.7 μmol) were suspended in 2 mL of benzene for five minutes at room temperature. Filtration and evaporation of the solvent under atmospheric pressure afforded [(Z)-2<sup>NCS+</sup>][OTf]<sup>-</sup> (52.4 mg, 79.9 μmol, 81% yield) as yellow crystals suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis. Solid-state IR: ν(NCS) = 2056 cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>S]<sup>+</sup> = [M]<sup>+</sup>: calcd. 506.3609; found 506.3606.

**[(CAAC)(iPr)B(CN)]<sup>+</sup>[OTf]<sup>-</sup>, [(Z)-2<sup>CN+</sup>][OTf<sup>-</sup>]**

**2<sup>CN</sup>** (100 mg, 0.211 mmol) and AgOTf (54.2 mg, 0.211 μmol) were suspended in 5 mL of benzene for five minutes at room temperature, whereupon a black precipitate was formed. Filtration and evaporation of the solvent under atmospheric pressure afforded a large crop of yellow crystals of **[(Z)-2<sup>CN+</sup>][OTf<sup>-</sup>]** (111 mg, 0.178 mmol, 85% yield) suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis. Solid-state IR:  $\nu(\text{CN}) = 2145 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . HRMS LIFDI for  $[\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{48}\text{BN}_4] = [\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ : calcd. 475.3967; found 475.3959.

**[(CAAC)(iPr)BH(NCS)][SPh], **3<sup>NCS</sup>**, and (CAACH)(iPr)B(NCS)(SPh), **4<sup>NCS</sup>****

A solution of **2<sup>NCS</sup>** (100 mg, 197 μmol) and thiophenol (26.1 mg, 237 μmol, 1.20 equiv.) in 5 mL of benzene was stirred overnight at rt resulting in a colourless solution, the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectra of which showed the formation of a 2:3 mixture of **3<sup>NCS</sup>** and **4<sup>NCS</sup>**, respectively. Further stirring for 3 days at rt led to the formation of a colourless precipitate. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the solid residue was washed with hexane. Drying *in vacuo* afforded a 85:15 mixture of diastereomers of **4<sup>NCS</sup>** (99.6 mg, 162 μmol, 82% yield). Colourless single crystals of the (*R,R*)/(*S,S*) diastereomer of **4<sup>NCS</sup>** were obtained by vapour diffusion of hexane in a saturated benzene solution. *Note: due to its continuous conversion to 4<sup>NCS</sup> at rt in solution, 3<sup>NCS</sup> could not be isolated and only its <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>11</sup>B NMR data recorded in situ could be obtained.* NMR data for NMR **3<sup>NCS</sup>**: <sup>1</sup>H{<sup>11</sup>B} NMR (400 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 8.47\text{--}8.23$  (m, 1H, *p*-ArH), 8.06–7.76 (m, 2H, *m*-ArH), 7.36–6.76 (m, 5H, SC<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>, overlapping with residual thiophenol), 4.73 (br s, 1H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 4.29 (br s, 1H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.76 (s, 1H, BH), 2.90 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 2.63 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.6 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 2.33 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 13.5 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 2.00 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 13.5 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.70–0.95 (m, 37H, BH<sub>2</sub>, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (128 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = -18.9$  (br s) ppm. *Note: for the minor diastereomer of 4<sup>NCS</sup> only the <sup>1</sup>H NMR data are provided.* NMR data for the minor diastereomer of **4<sup>NCS</sup>** (15%): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 7.48\text{--}7.40$  (m, ArH), 7.01–6.92 (m, ArH), 6.20 (s, iPr-CH), 6.14 (s, iPr-CH), 5.44 (br s, iPr-CH), 5.20 (br s, iPr-CH), 4.14 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, iPr-CH), 3.79 (s, 1H, BCH), 1.95 (br s, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.76–1.74 (m), 1.57–1.54 (m), 1.44–1.42 (m), 1.32 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.29–1.15 (m), 0.88–0.86 (m), 0.79 (s), 0.51 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.5 Hz, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. NMR data for the major diastereomer of **4<sup>NCS</sup>** (85%): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 7.37$  (dd, <sup>3</sup>J = 7.6 Hz, <sup>2</sup>J = 1.8 Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.28 (t, <sup>3</sup>J = 7.6 Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.18–7.17 (m, 1H, ArH), 7.10–7.09 (m, 1H, ArH), 7.08–7.07 (m, 1H, ArH), 6.89 (t, <sup>3</sup>J = 7.7 Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.80–6.76 (m, 1H, ArH), 6.06 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 2.2 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 6.05 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 2.2 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 5.57 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.6 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 5.49

(sept,  $^3J = 6.6$  Hz, 1H, *iPr-CH*), 4.82 (sept,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 1H, *iPr-CH*), 3.70 (s, 1H, BCH), 3.45 (sept,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 1H, *iPr-CH*), 2.22 (d,  $^2J = 12.2$  Hz, 1H,  $CH_2$ ), 2.02 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 2.01 (s, 3H, NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 1.80 (d,  $^2J = 12.2$  Hz, 1H,  $CH_2$ ), 1.61 (d,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 1.48 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 1.41 (s, 3H, NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 1.39 (d,  $^3J = 6.6$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 1.10 (s, 3H, NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 1.08 (d,  $^3J = 6.5$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 1.00 (d,  $^3J = 6.8$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 0.91 (d,  $^3J = 6.7$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 0.90 (d,  $^3J = 6.6$  Hz, 3H, *iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 0.89 (s, 3H, C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>) ppm.  $^{13}C\{^1H\}$  NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = 153.8$  (ArC), 147.8 (ArC), 145.9 (ArC), 140.8 (ArC), 132.7 (ArC), 126.3 (ArC), 125.0 (ArC), 124.6 (ArC), 124.5 (ArC), 117.5 (*iPr-CH*), 117.4 (*iPr-CH*), 72.1 (BCH), 63.2 (NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 61.4 ( $CH_2$ ), 51.5 (*iPr-CH*), 50.8 (*iPr-CH*), 41.9 (C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 35.4 (C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 33.4 (NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 29.5 (C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 28.9 (NC( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 28.6 (C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 28.0 (C( $CH_3$ )<sub>2</sub>), 27.5 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 25.7 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 25.6 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 25.5 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 24.1 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 23.8 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 23.1 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>), 22.8 (*iPr-CH*<sub>3</sub>) ppm. *Note: the C<sub>carbene</sub> and C<sub>NCS</sub> resonances were not detected, even by HMBC.*  $^{11}B$  NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K):  $\delta = -6.0$  (s) ppm. Solid-state IR:  $\nu(NCS) = 2137$  cm<sup>-1</sup>. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>52</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>S<sub>2</sub>] = [M – H]<sup>-</sup>: calcd. 615.3721; found 615.3715.

### [(CAAC)(*iPr*)BH(CN)][SPh], **3<sup>CN</sup>**

Treatment of a solution of **2<sup>CN</sup>** (20.0 mg, 42.1  $\mu$ mol) in 0.5 mL of C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> with thiophenol (10.2 mg, 92.7  $\mu$ mol, 2.20 equiv.) led to partial fading of the yellow colour of the solution. The reaction mixture was monitored *in situ* by  $^{11}B$ ,  $^{11}B\{^1H\}$ ,  $^1H$  and  $^1H\{^{11}B\}$  NMR spectroscopy. After 15 min at room temperature the NMR spectra showed ca. 85% conversion of **2<sup>CN</sup>** to **3<sup>CN</sup>**. The ratio of the mixture did not change over a course of 1 day, whereupon various attempts to isolate **3<sup>CN</sup>** were made.

**Attempt A.** Prolonged heating of the reaction mixture at 80 °C afforded a 65:35 ratio of **2<sup>CN</sup>** and **3<sup>CN</sup>**, suggesting an equilibrium between **2<sup>CN</sup>** and **3<sup>CN</sup>**. Upon cooling a few colourless single crystals of **3<sup>CN</sup>** suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained. *Note: due to the very weak diffraction the X-ray crystallographic data was of insufficient quality for structural discussion but provided proof of connectivity.*

**Attempt B.** After removal of the solvent *in vacuo* the residual yellow solid was dried *in vacuo* at 60 °C for 4 h. Redissolving this solid in 0.5 mL of C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> resulted in almost quantitative recovery of **2<sup>CN</sup>** (see Figures S37 and S38).

**Attempt C.** The reaction mixture was left undisturbed overnight, yielding colourless crystals of **3<sup>CN</sup>**, the supernatant of which was decanted. Subsequently, the crystals of **3<sup>CN</sup>** were washed with small amounts of hexane (2  $\times$  0.3 mL) and dried under atmospheric pressure for 1 h.

Redissolving these crystals in 0.5 mL of C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> afforded **2**<sup>CN</sup> and residual thiophenol. *Note: due to its continuous partial conversion to 2<sup>CN</sup> at rt in solution, only the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>11</sup>B NMR data of 3<sup>CN</sup> recorded in situ could be obtained. Further conversion of 3<sup>CN</sup> to the 4<sup>CN</sup> analogue of 4<sup>NCS</sup> was not observed, even in the presence of a vast excess of thiophenol.* NMR data for NMR **3**<sup>CN</sup>: <sup>1</sup>H{<sup>11</sup>B} NMR (400 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 8.53–7.79 (m, 3H, ArH), 4.77 (br s, 1H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 4.34 (br s, 1H, iPr-CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 3.02 (s, 1H, BH), 2.93 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 2.62 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.6 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 2.40 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 13.5 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 2.03 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 13.5 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (128 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = –29.3 (br s) ppm. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>48</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>] = [M – C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>S]<sup>+</sup>: calcd. 475.3967; found 475.3959.

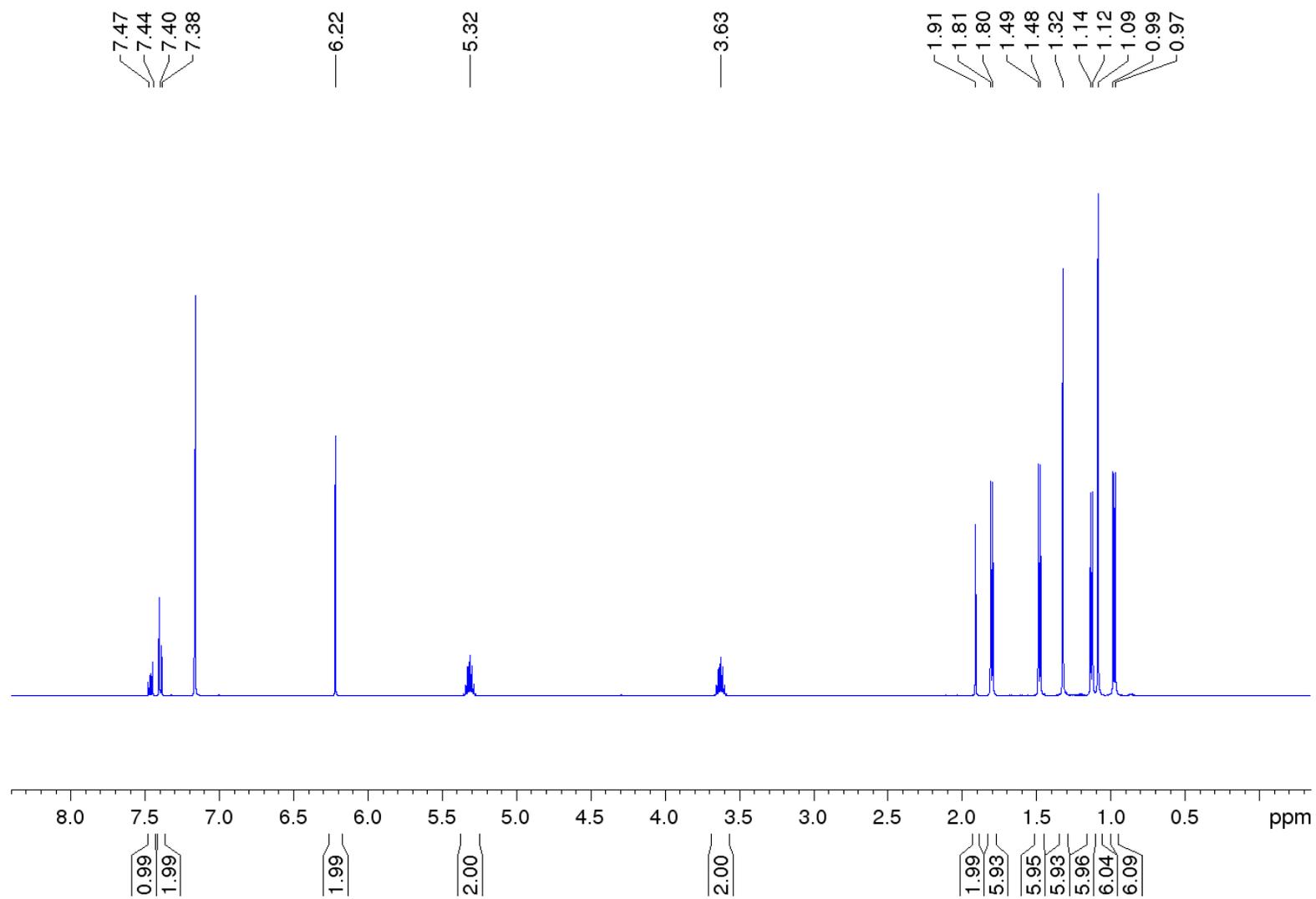
**VT-NMR experiment:** **2**<sup>CN</sup> (9.30 mg, 0.20 mmol) in 0.5 mL of Toluene-d<sub>8</sub> was treated with an excess of thiophenol (ca. 2–5 eq.) whereupon the yellow colour vanished and a colourless solid precipitated. The mixture was monitored *in situ* by <sup>11</sup>B and <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy while heating stepwise from rt to 100 °C (see Figures S39 and S40). Upon cooling colourless single crystals of **3**<sup>CN</sup> suitable for X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained.

### (CAACH)B(SPh)<sub>2</sub>, **5**

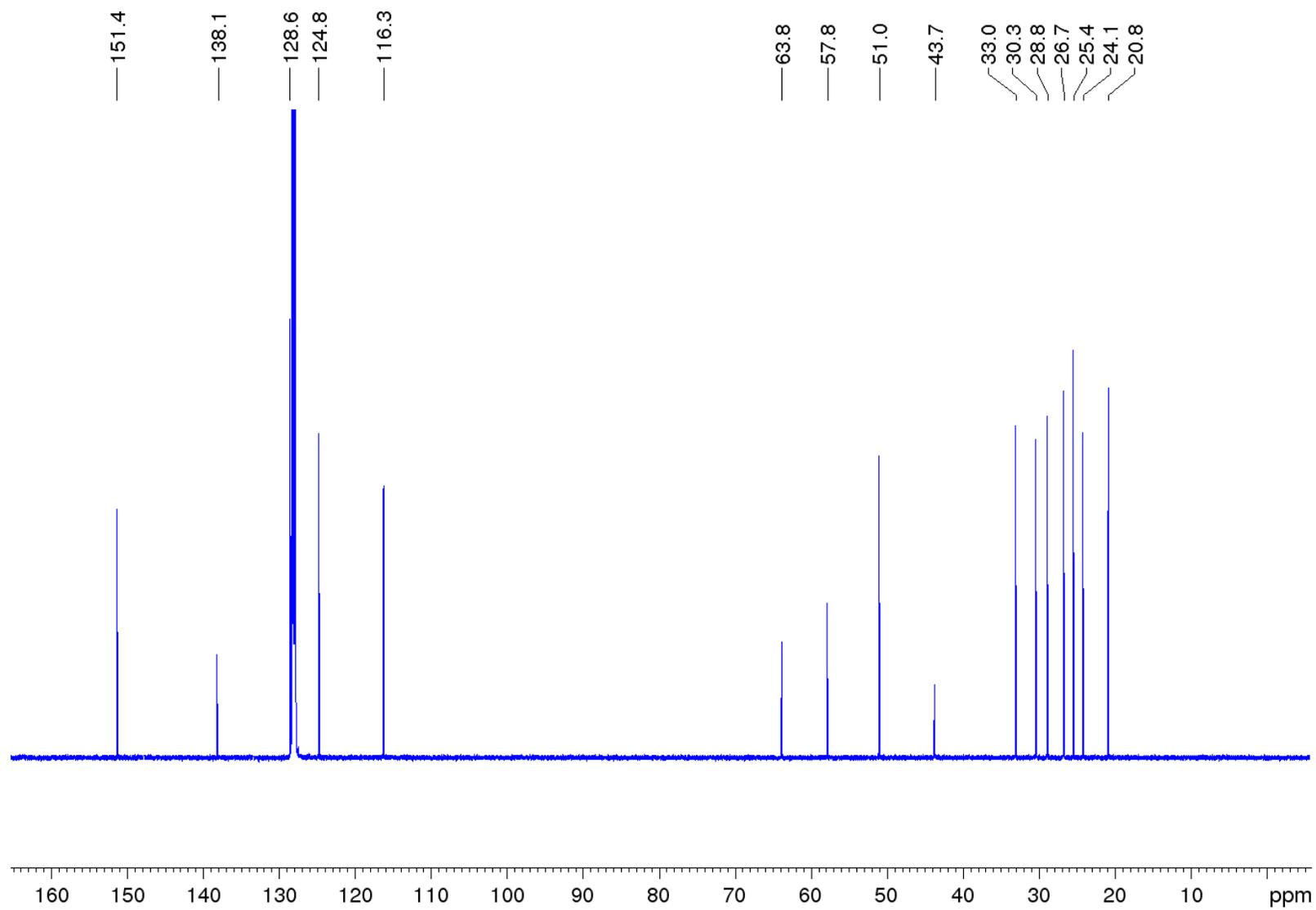
**Route A.** A solution of **2**<sup>NCS</sup> (100 mg, 197 μmol) and thiophenol (47.8 mg, 434 μmol, 2.20 equiv.) in 5 mL of benzene was stirred for 6 days at 60 °C until the orange colour disappeared. After evaporation of the solvent the residue was extracted with hexane. Removal of the solvent and drying *in vacuo* yielded **5** (75.0 mg, 146 μmol, 74% yield) as a colourless solid.

**Route B.** **4**<sup>NCS</sup> (10 mg, 16 μmol) and thiophenol (2.1 mg, 19 μmol, 1.2 equiv.) were combined in 0.6 mL of benzene and heated at 60 °C. After 6 days the <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectrum showed full conversion to **5**. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 7.49–7.47 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.26–7.18 (m, 3H, ArH), 6.94–6.81 (m, 6H, ArH), 6.71–6.69 (m, 2H, ArH), 3.64 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 3.44 (sept, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 1H, iPr-CH), 2.91 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 2.8 Hz, 1H, BCH), 2.55 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 14.3 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.72 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 3H, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.63 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 3H, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.37 (d, <sup>3</sup>J = 6.7 Hz, 6H, iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.32 (s, 3H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.30 (d, <sup>2</sup>J = 11.5 Hz, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 1.15 (s, 3H, NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 1.09 (s, 3H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 0.89 (s, 3H, C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>) ppm. <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 149.4 (ArC), 147.8 (ArC), 140.1 (ArC), 137.2 (ArC), 136.2 (ArC), 134.2 (ArC), 129.0 (ArC), 128.6 (ArC), 127.0 (ArC), 125.1 (ArC), 125.1 (ArC), 125.0 (ArC), 59.3 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 49.6 (CH<sub>2</sub>), 43.6 (BCH), 35.3 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 33.0 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.4 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 30.0 (C(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 29.5 (NC(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 29.4 (iPr-CH), 29.1 (iPr-CH), 27.1 (iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 27.0 (iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.5 (iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.1 (iPr-CH<sub>3</sub>) ppm. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>, 297 K): δ = 42.6 (broad s) ppm. HRMS LIFDI for [C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>42</sub>BNS<sub>2</sub>] = [M]: calcd. 515.2846; found 515.2843.

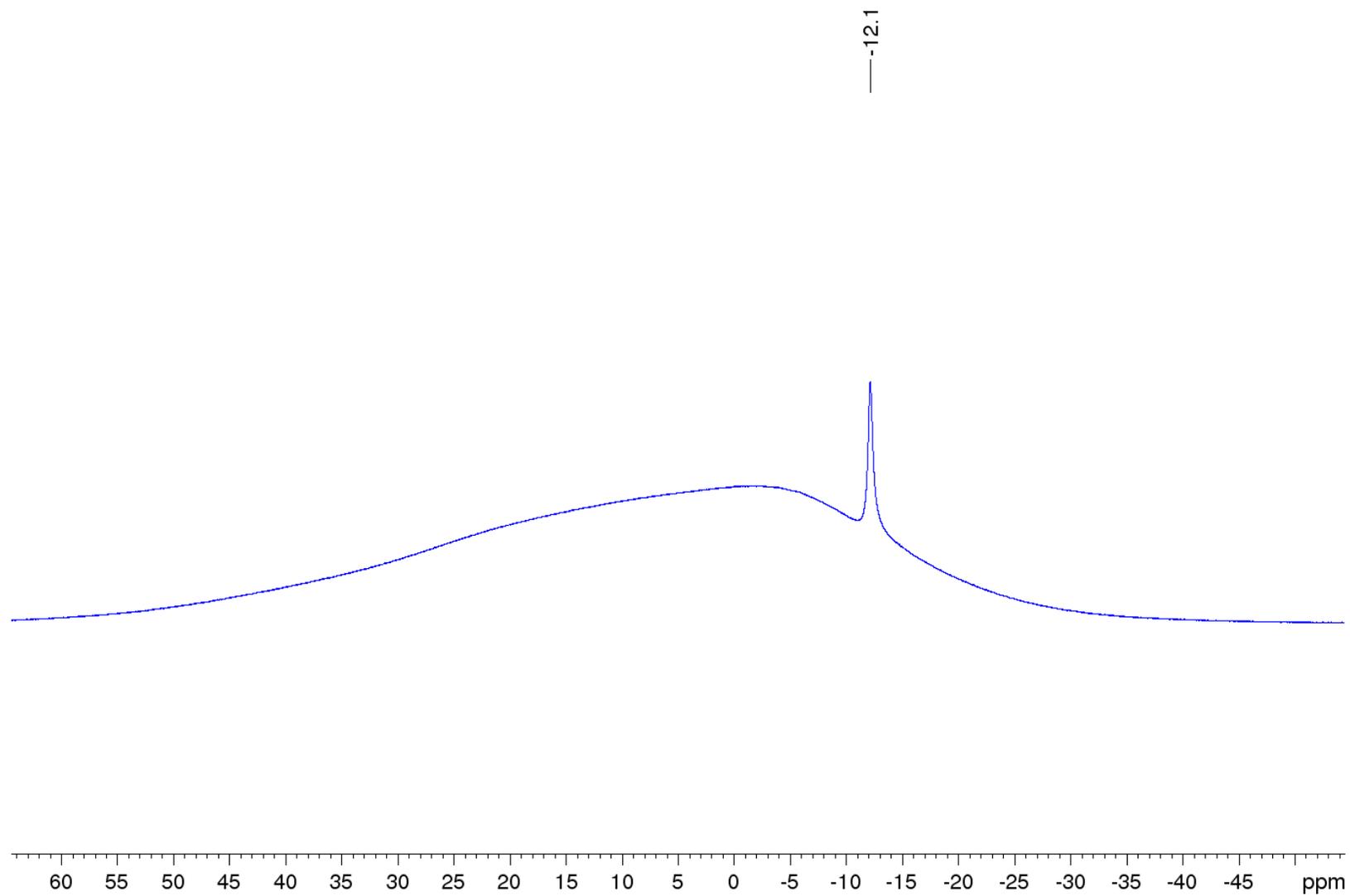
## NMR spectra of isolated compounds



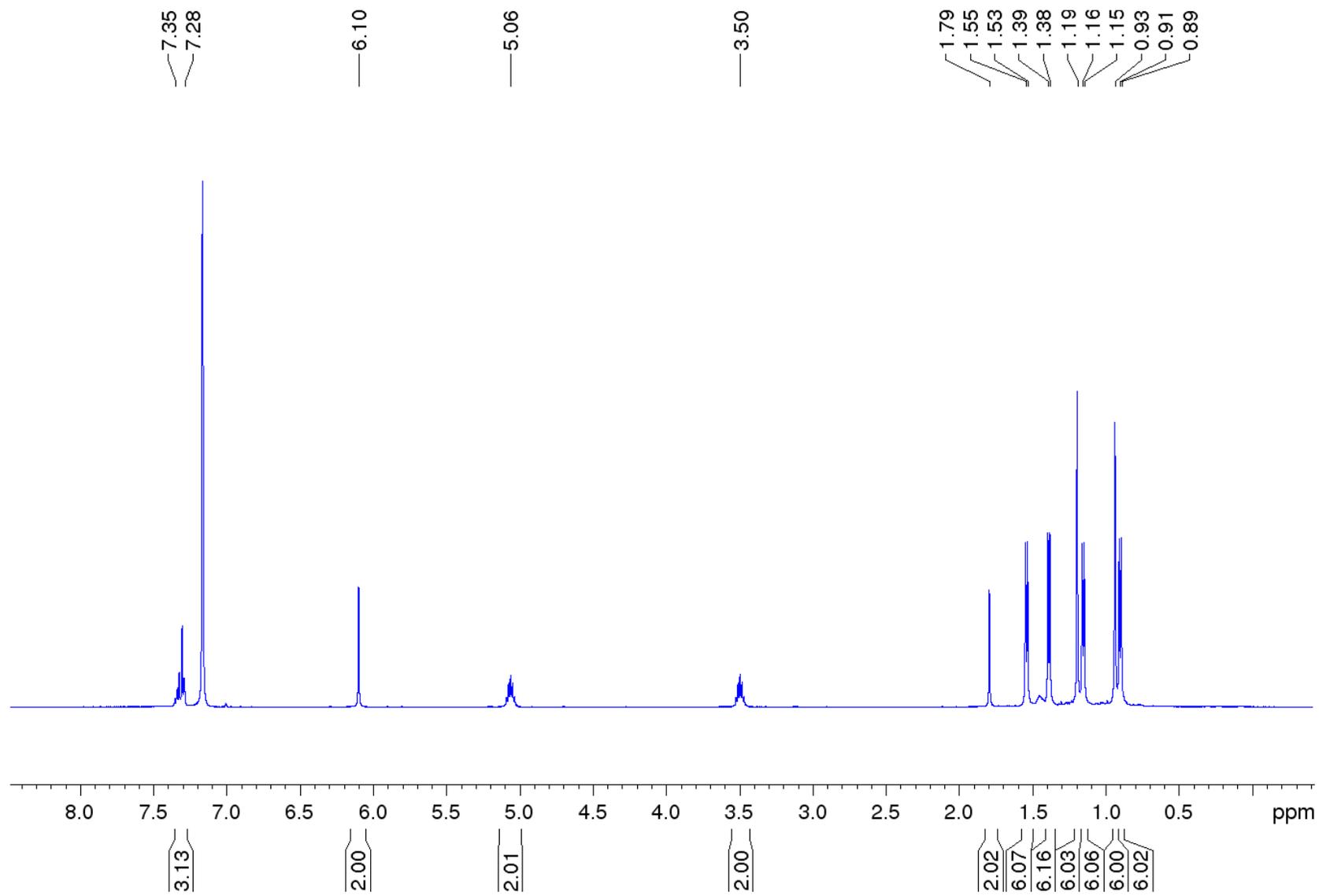
**Figure S1.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{CN}}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



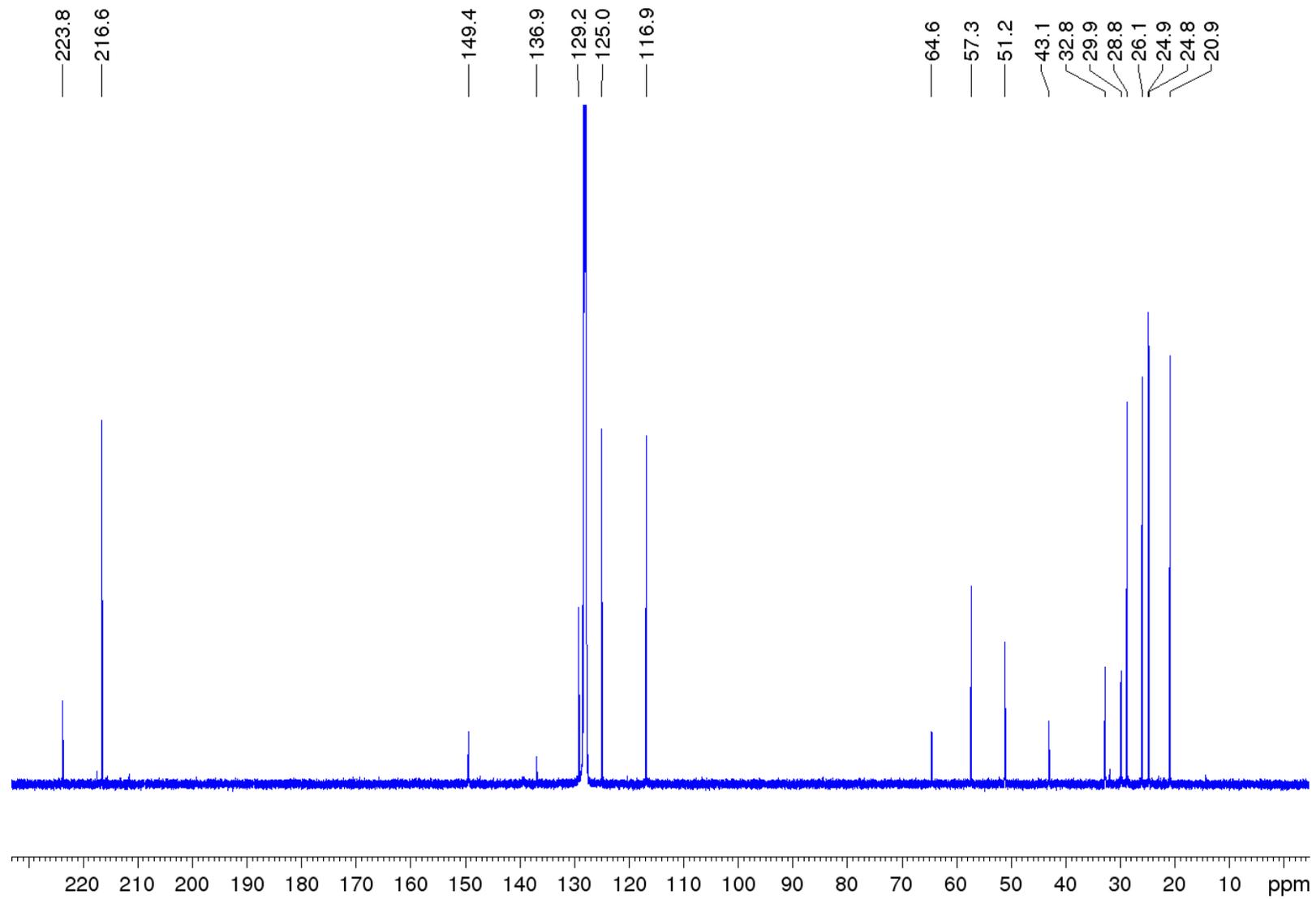
**Figure S2.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of **2**<sup>CN</sup> in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



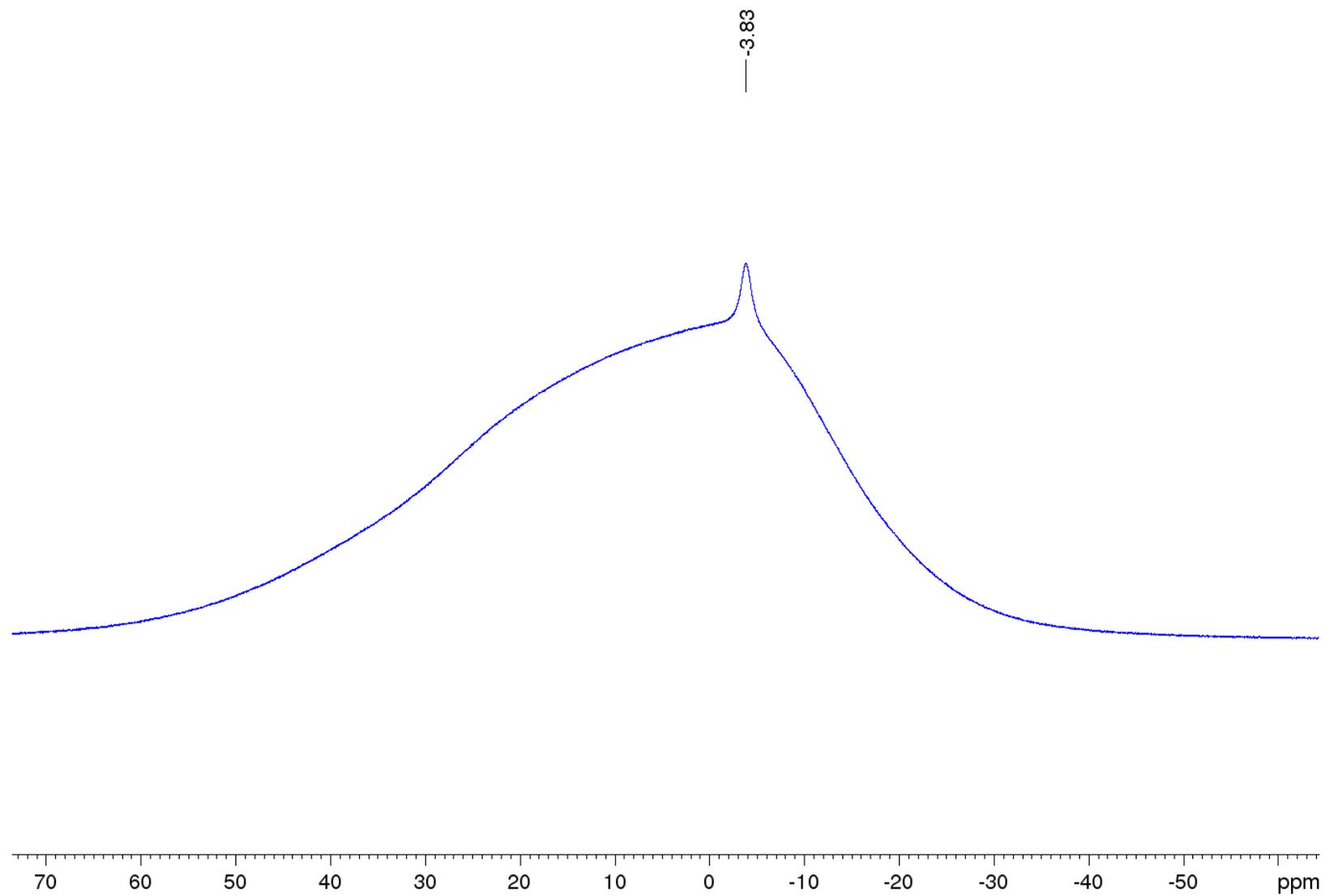
**Figure S3.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{CN}}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



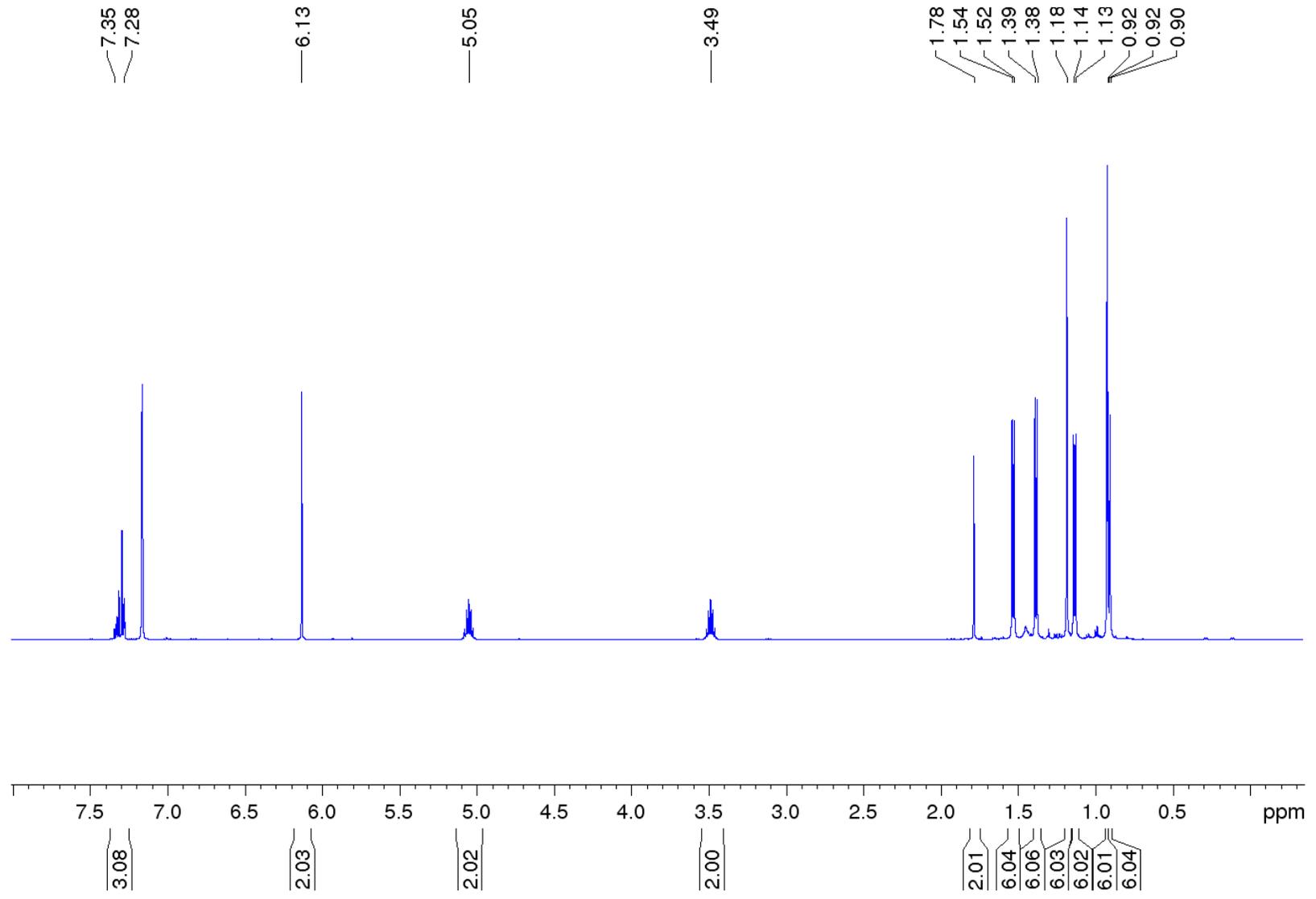
**Figure S4.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



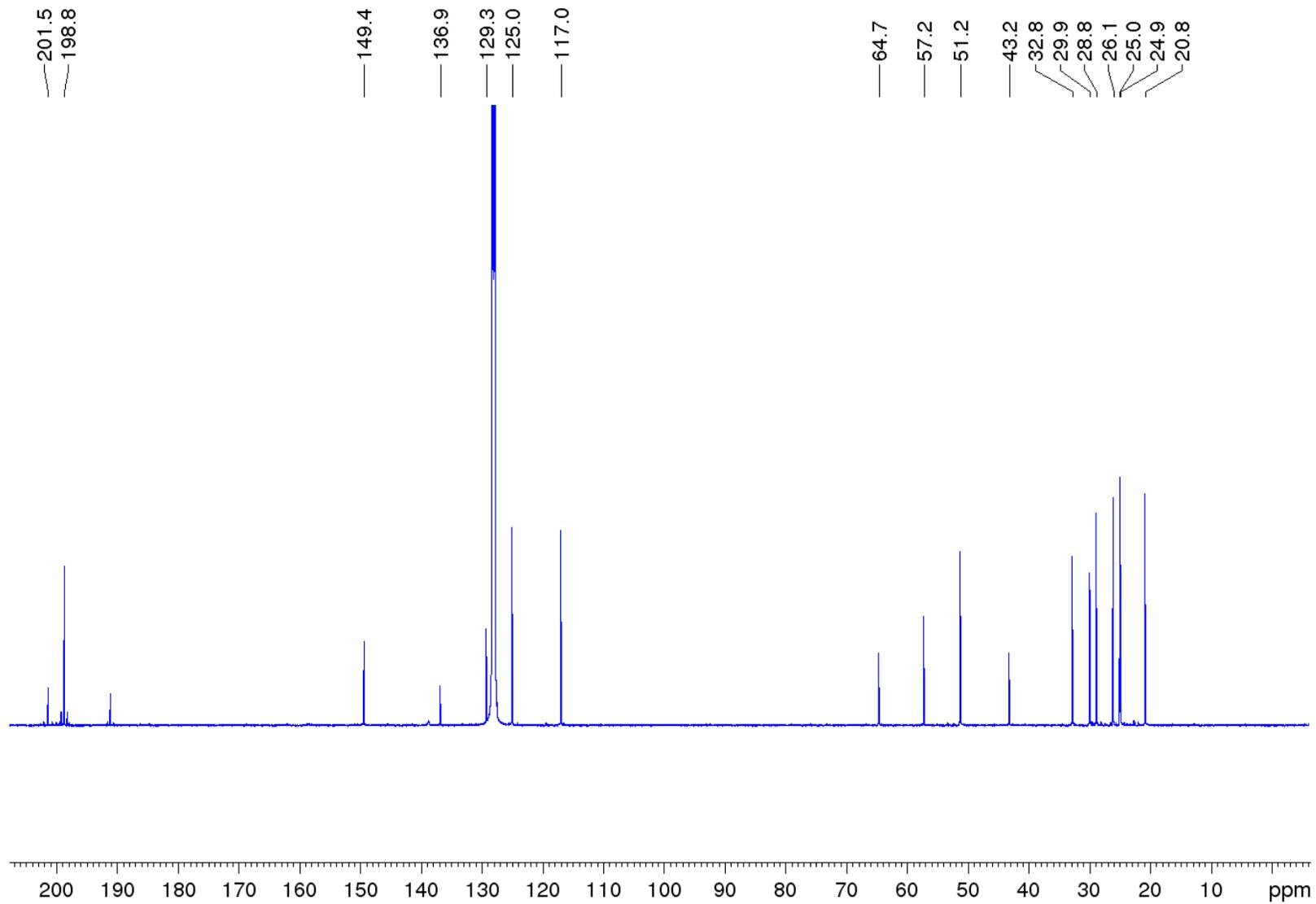
**Figure S5.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



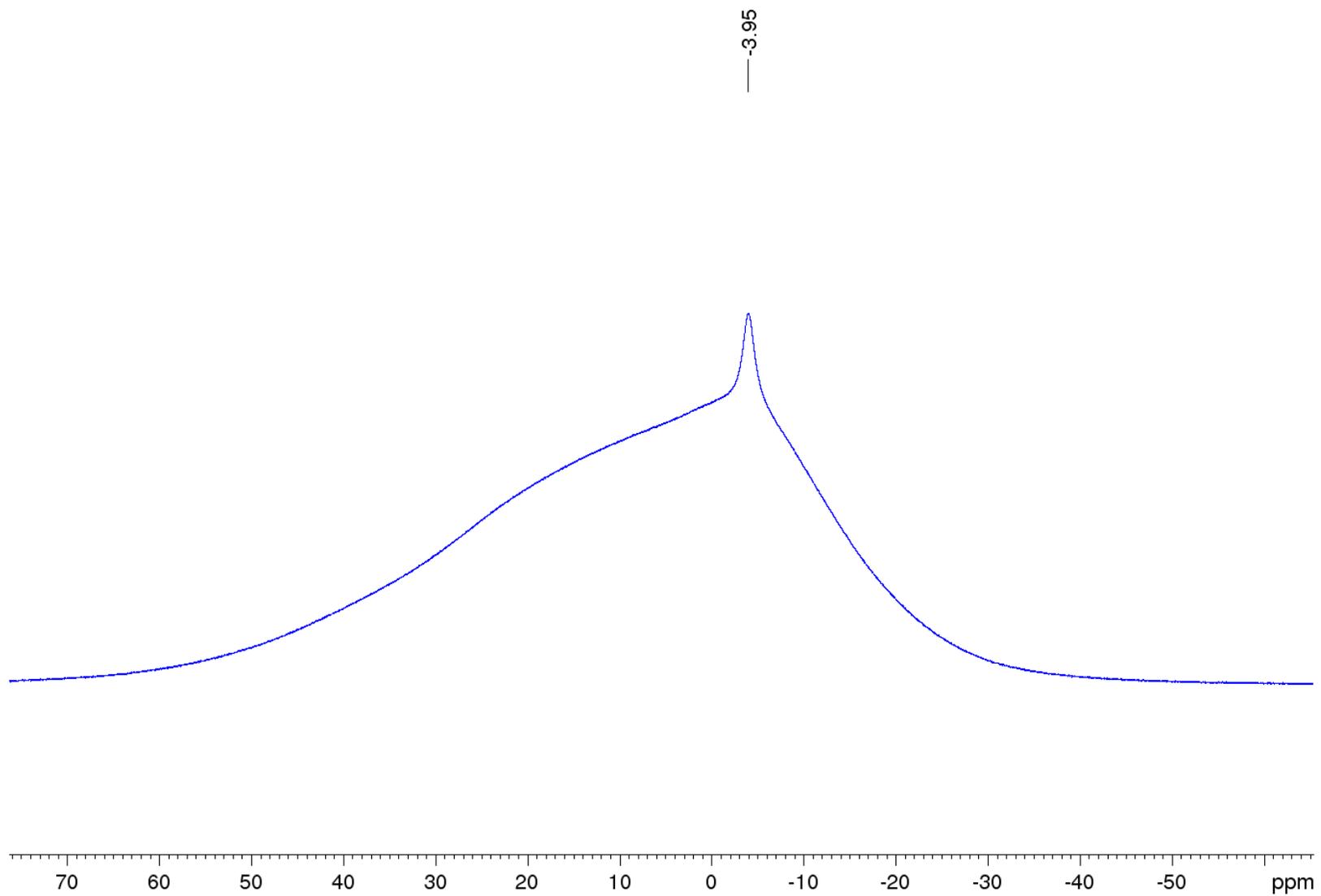
**Figure S6.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



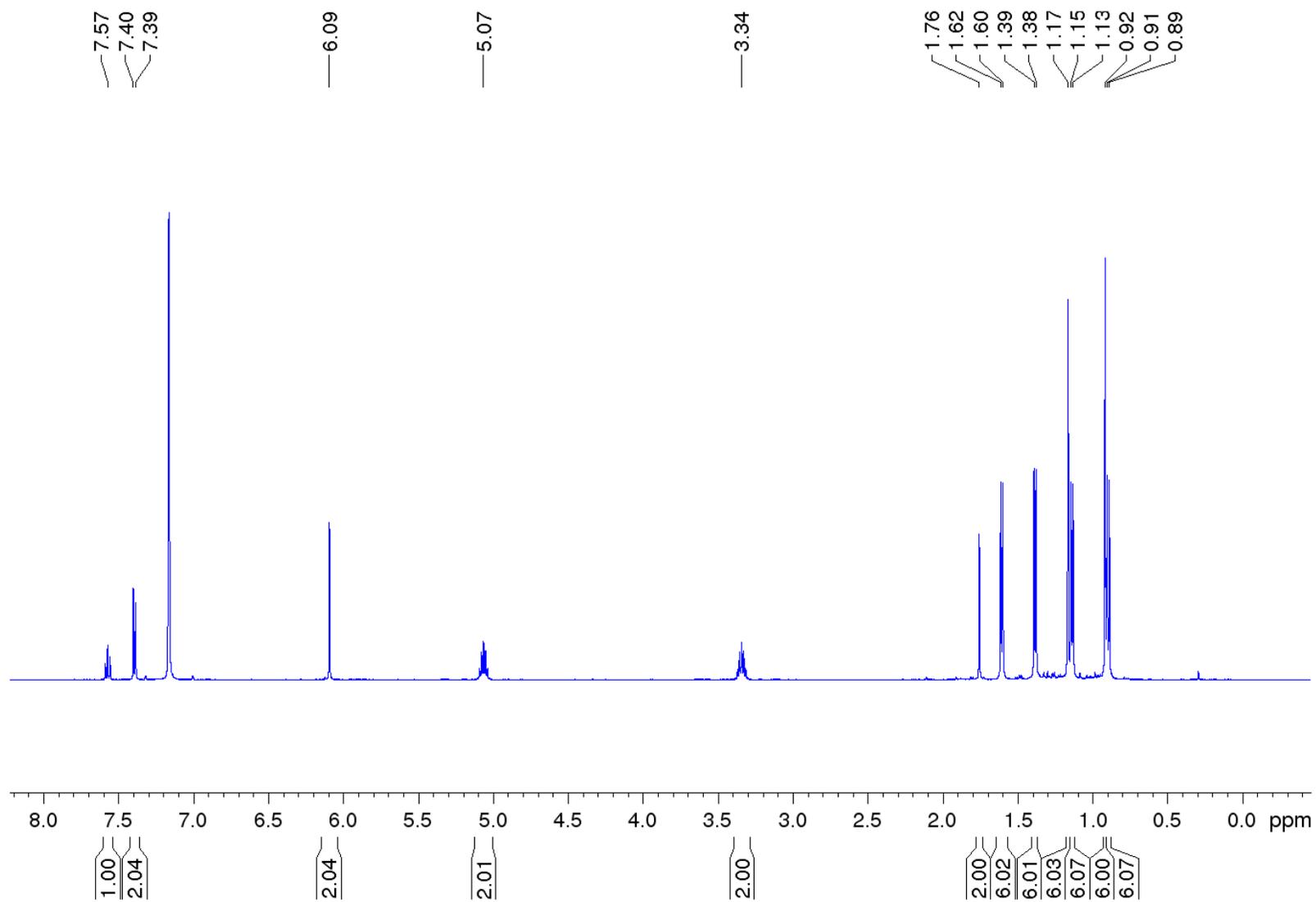
**Figure S7.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



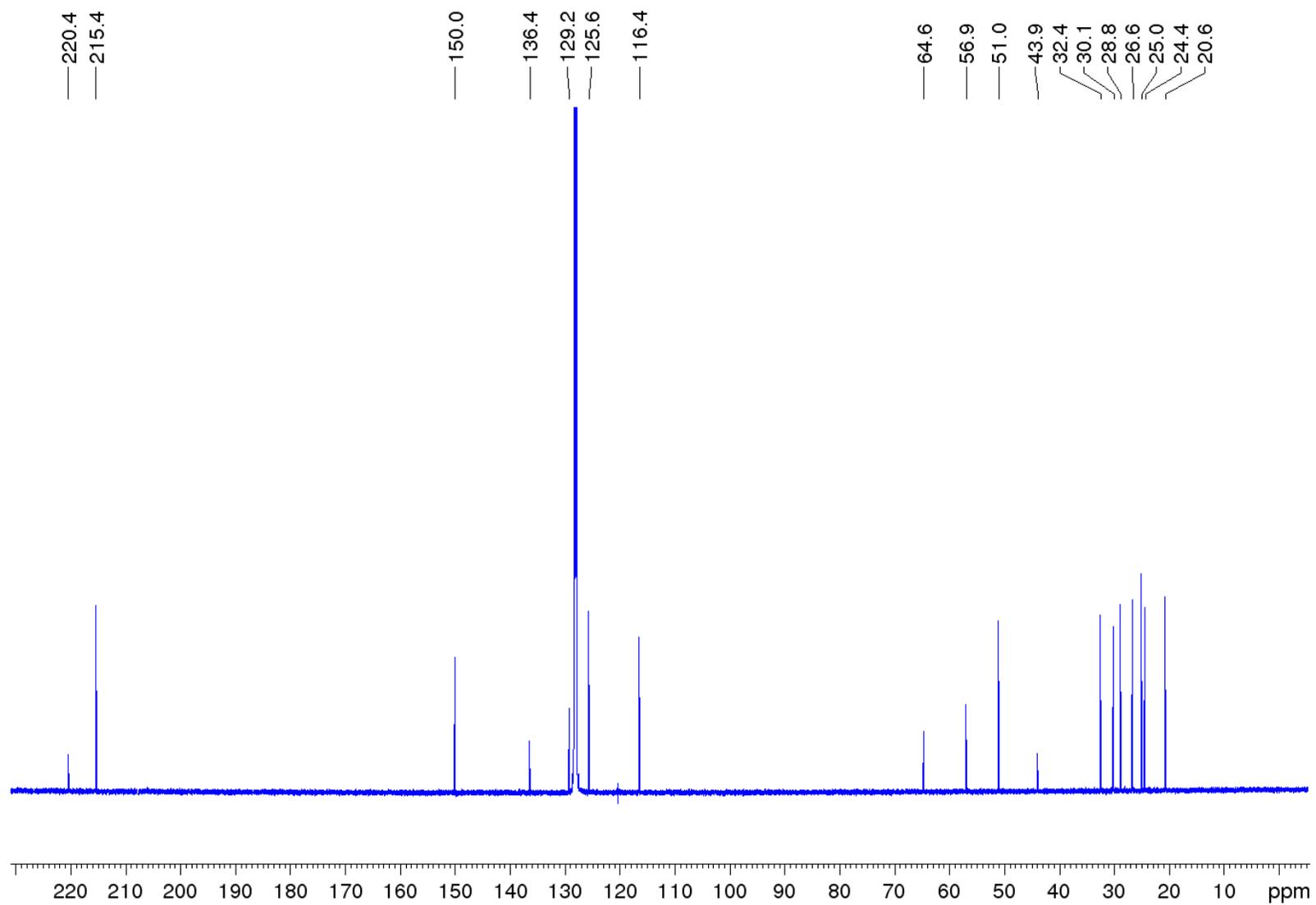
**Figure S8.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



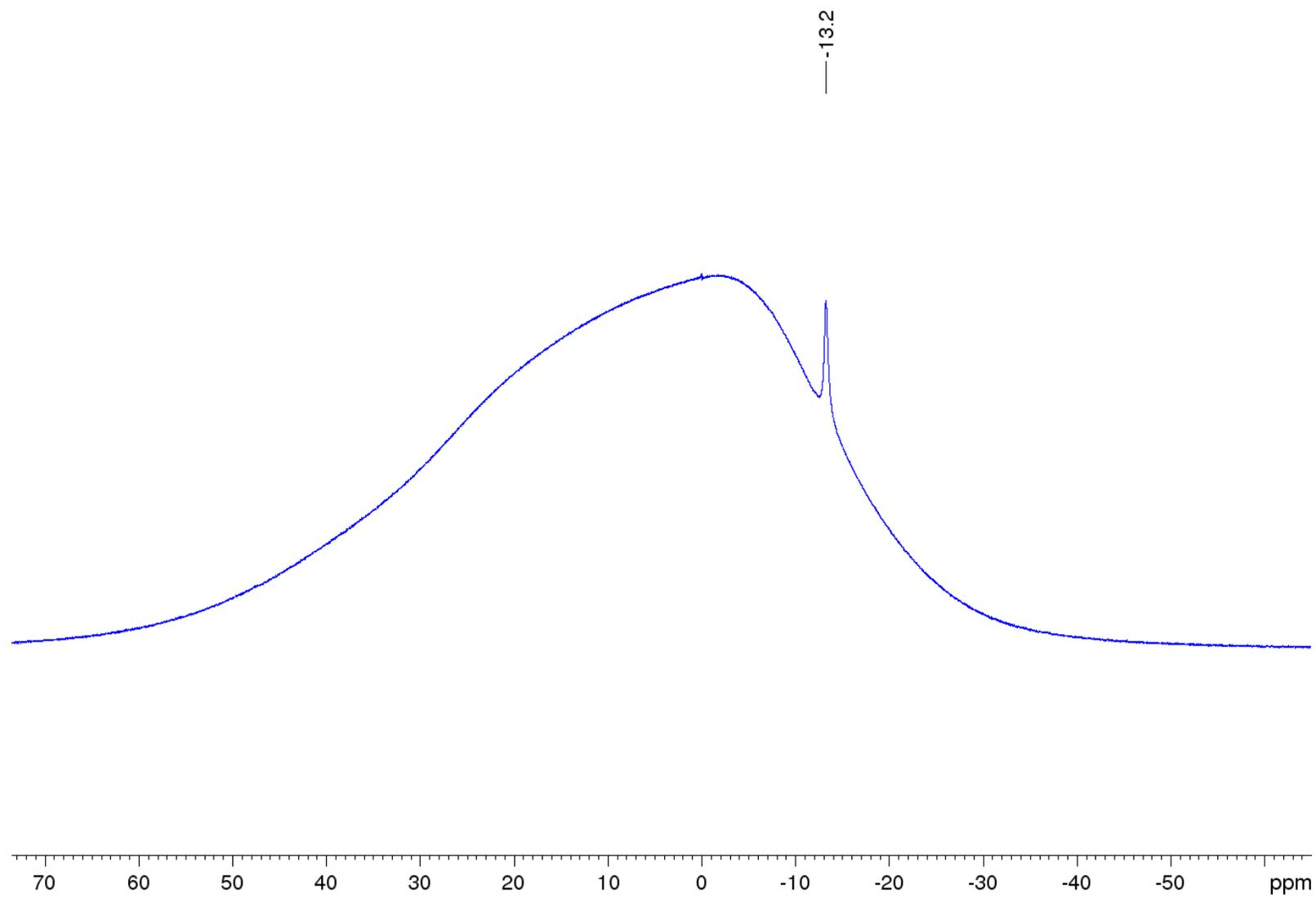
**Figure S9.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



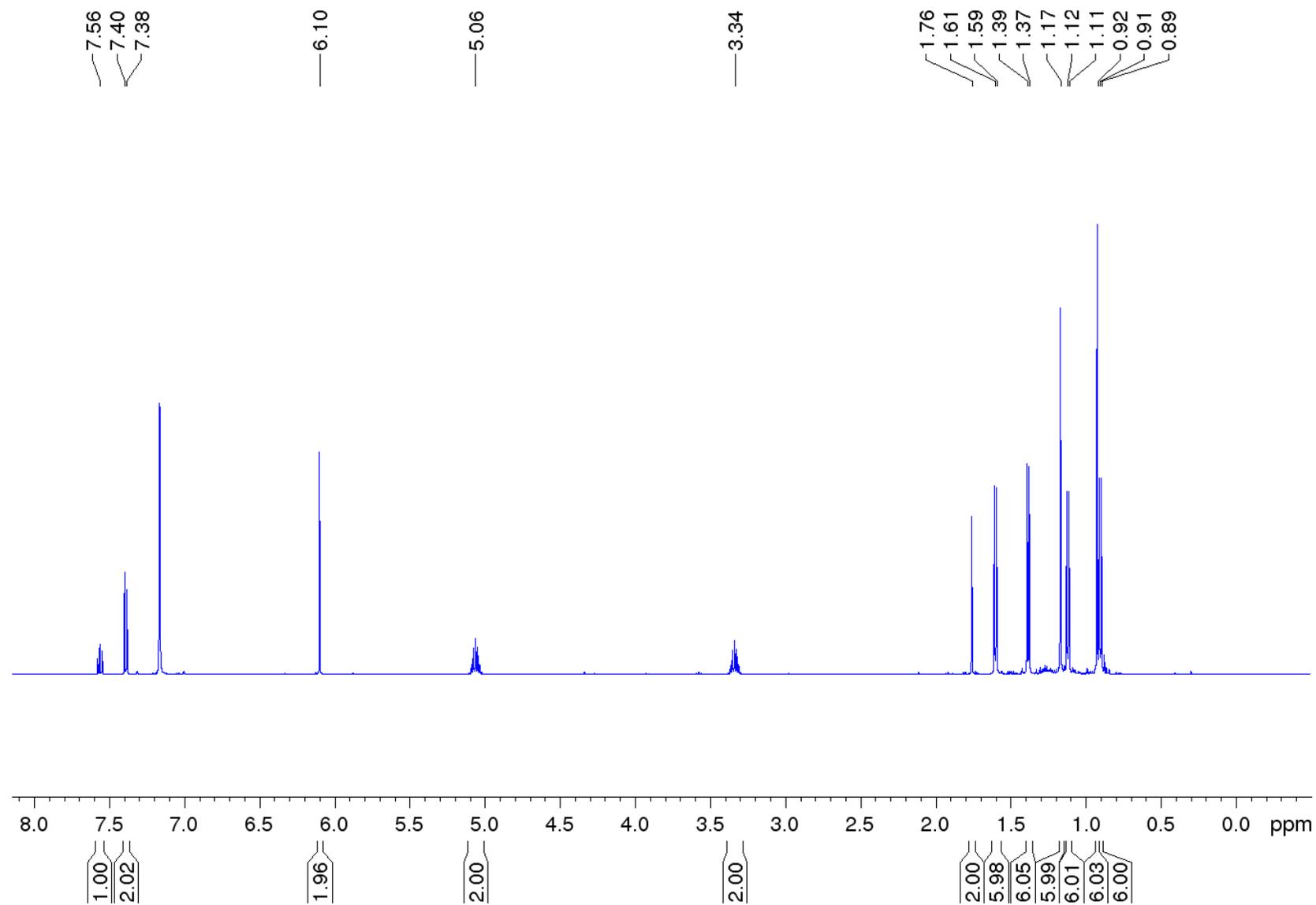
**Figure S10.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



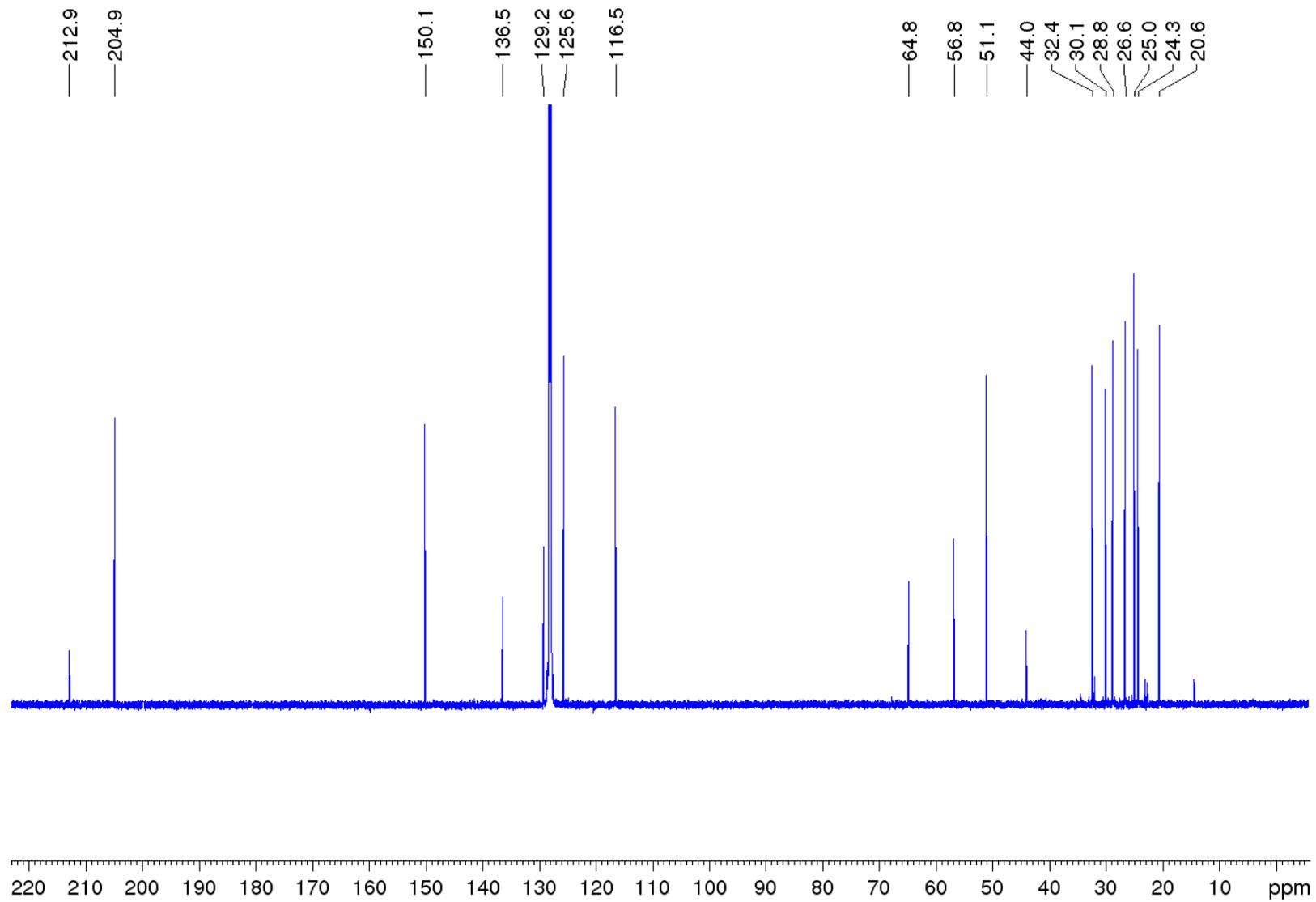
**Figure S11.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



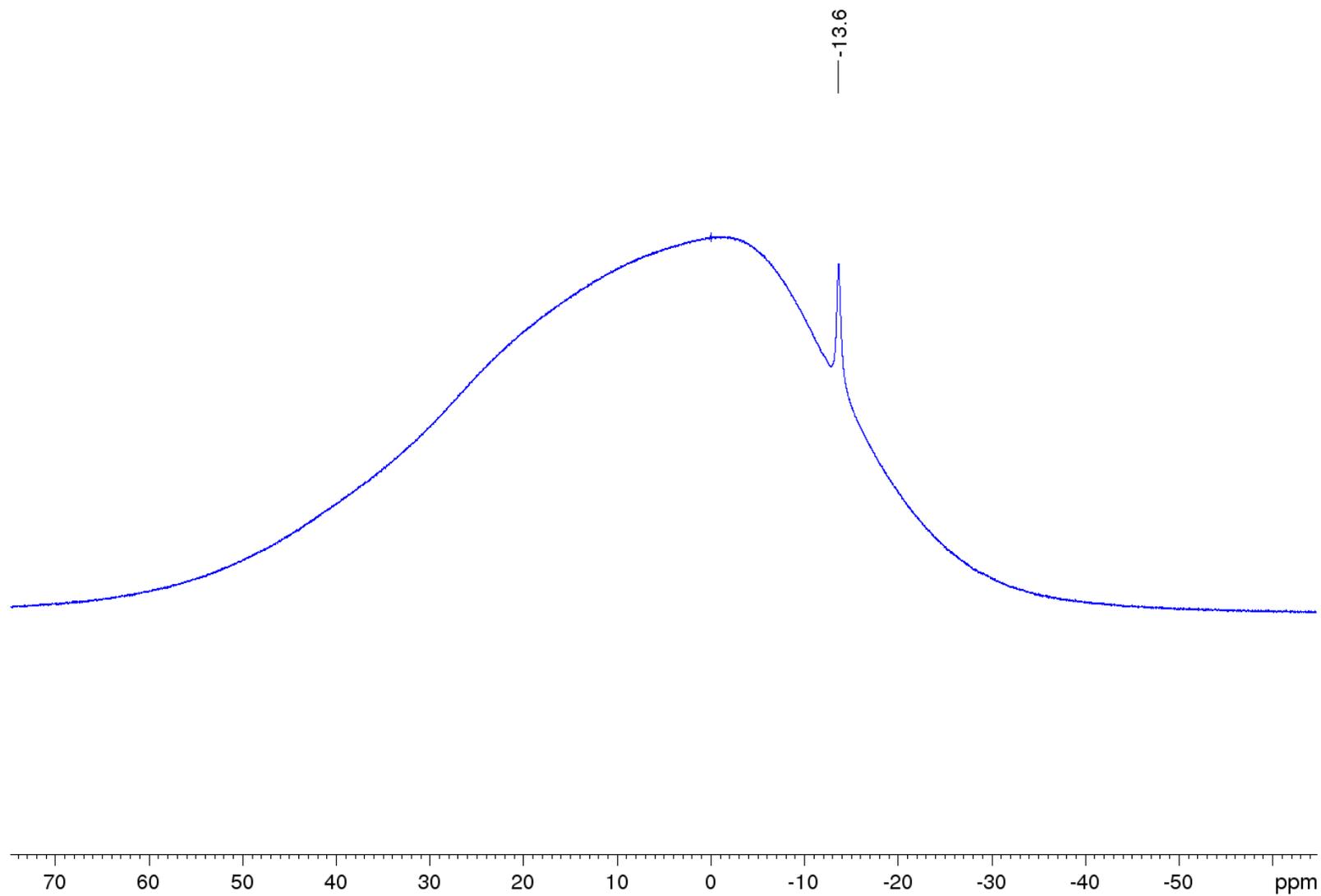
**Figure S12.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Cr}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



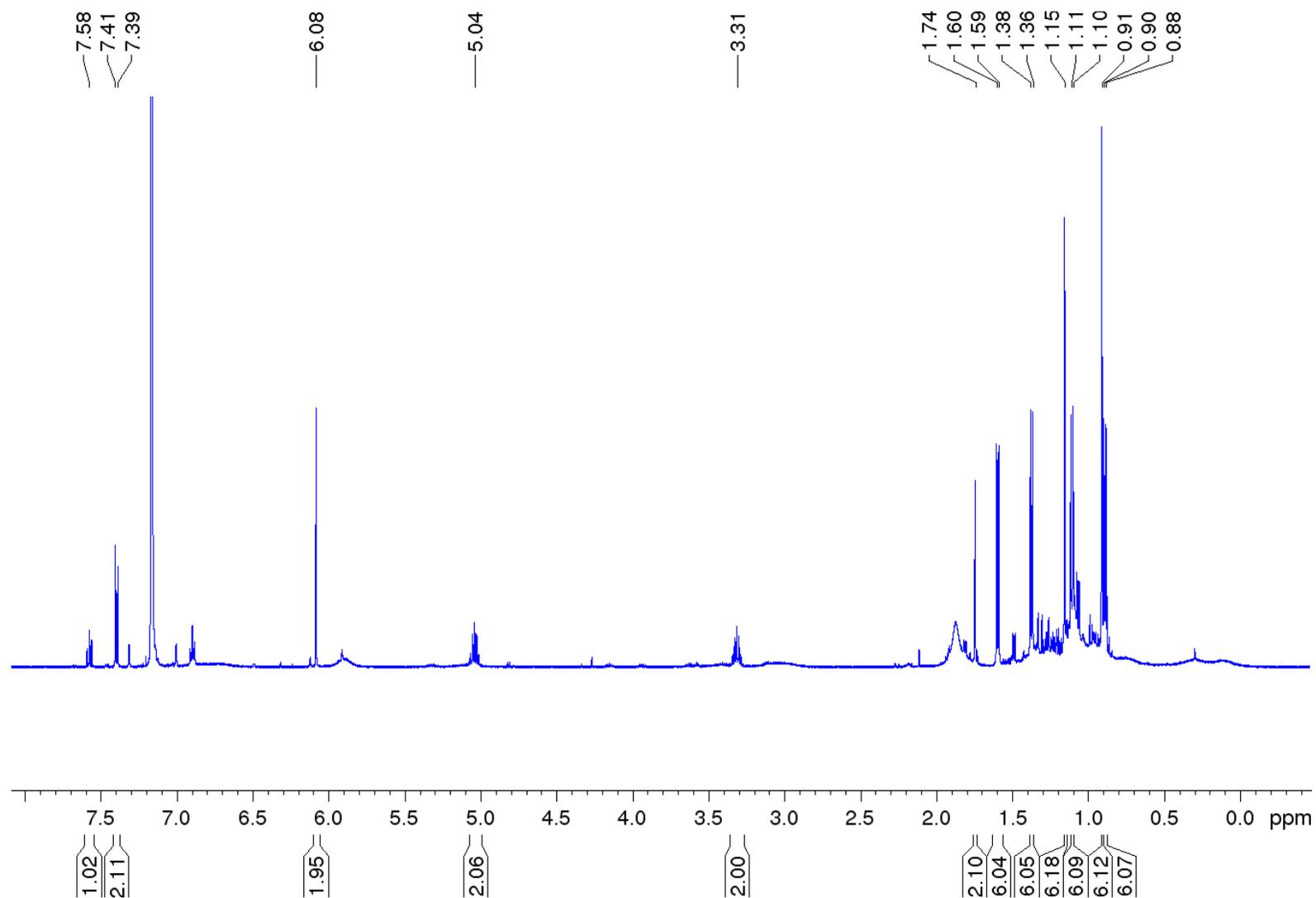
**Figure S13.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Mo}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



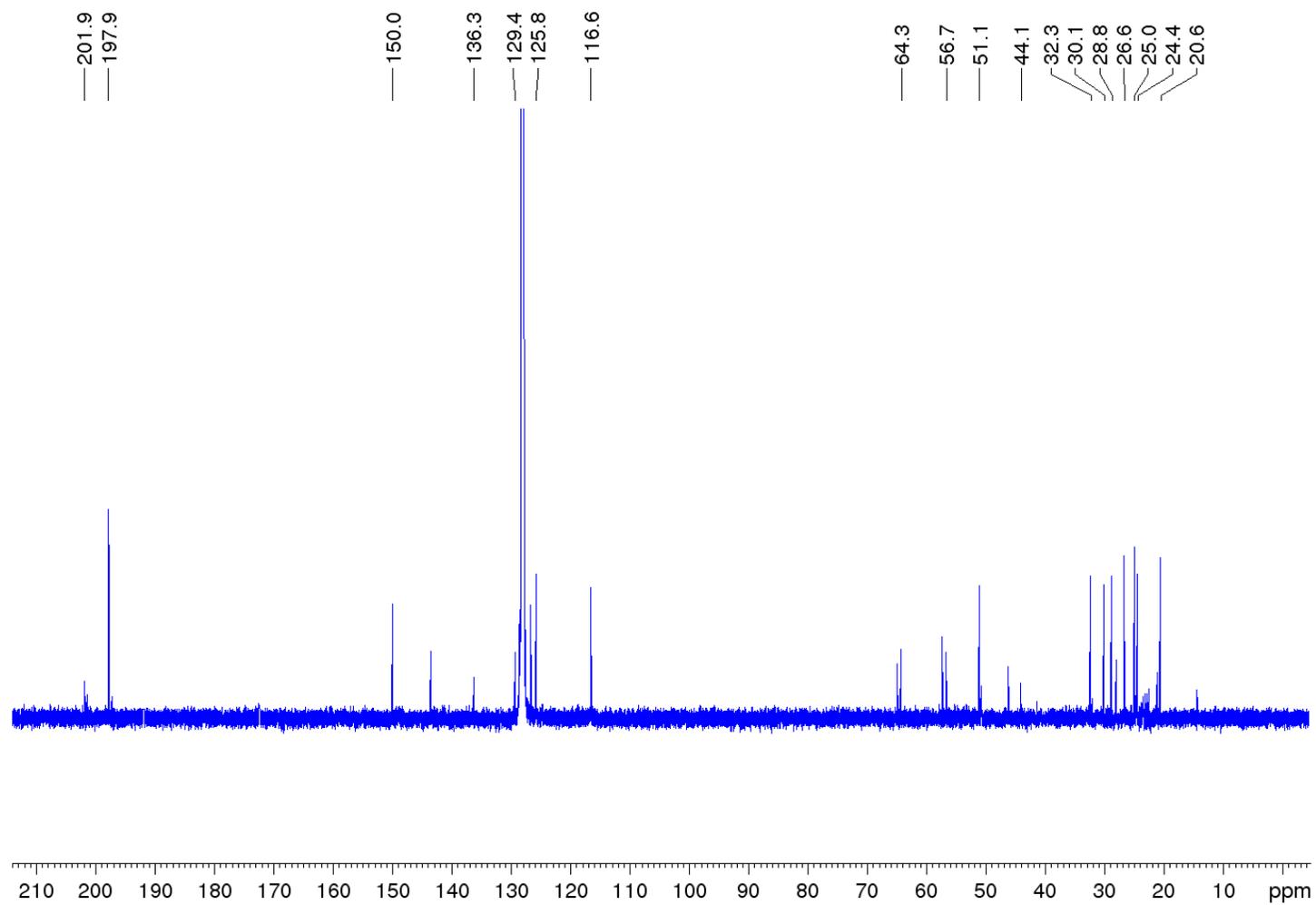
**Figure S14.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of (*Z*)-**2**<sup>CN</sup>-**Mo** in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



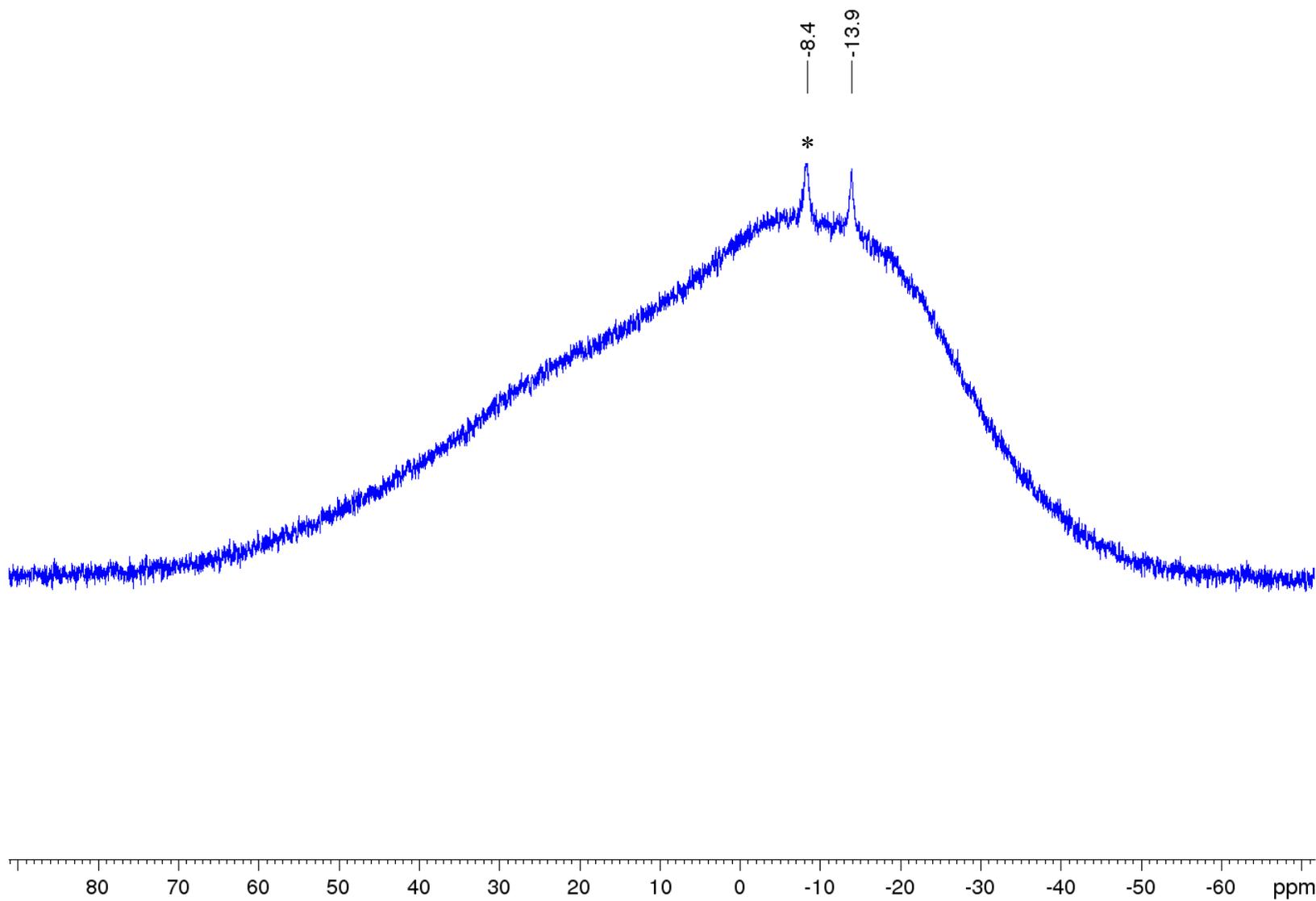
**Figure S15.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Mo}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



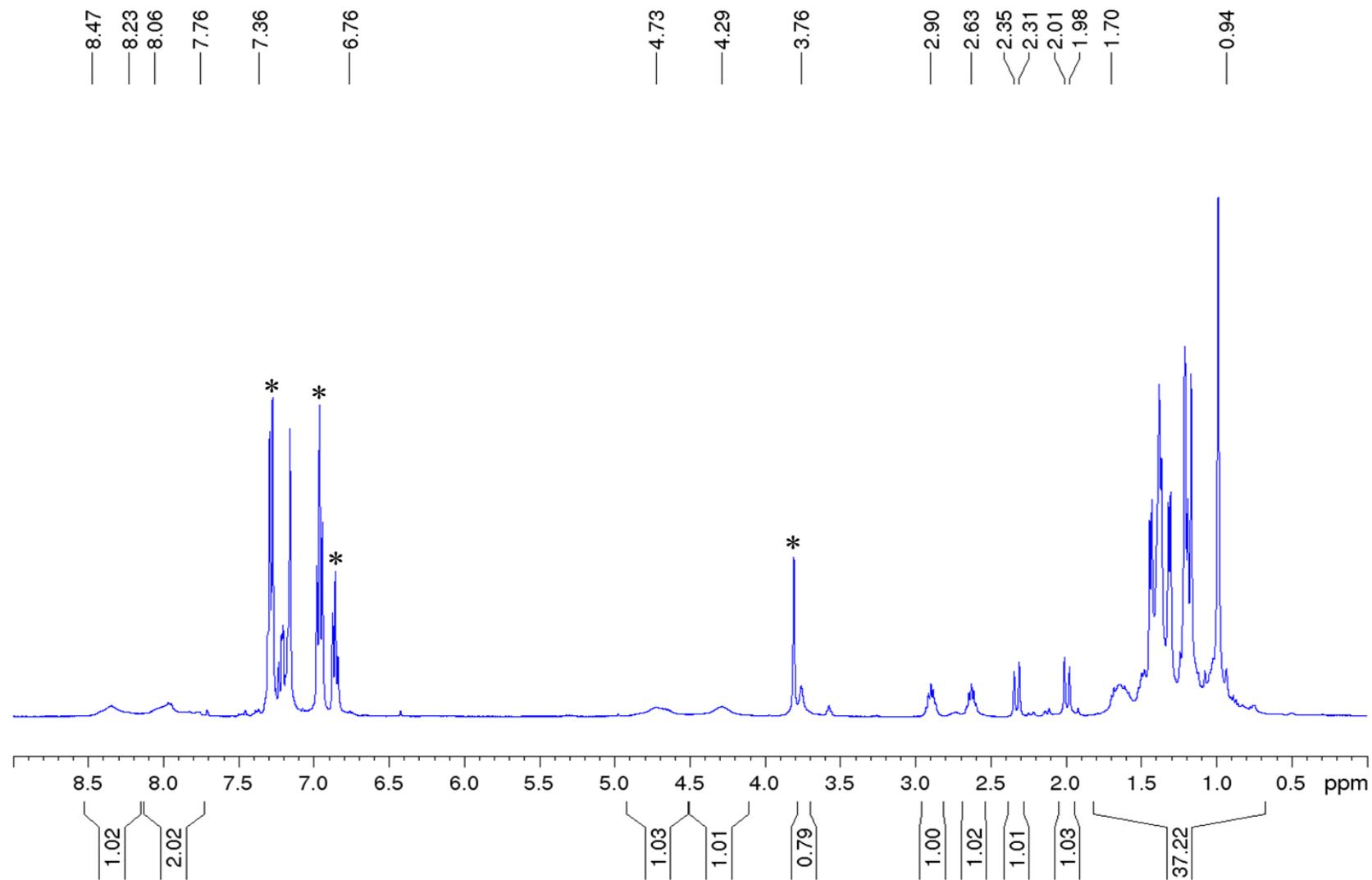
**Figure S16.** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of the 3:2 isomer mixture (*E*)/(*Z*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-**W** in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>. Only chemical shifts and integrals of the (*Z*)-isomer have been picked. The resonances of the (*E*)-isomer are strongly broadened by hindered rotation.



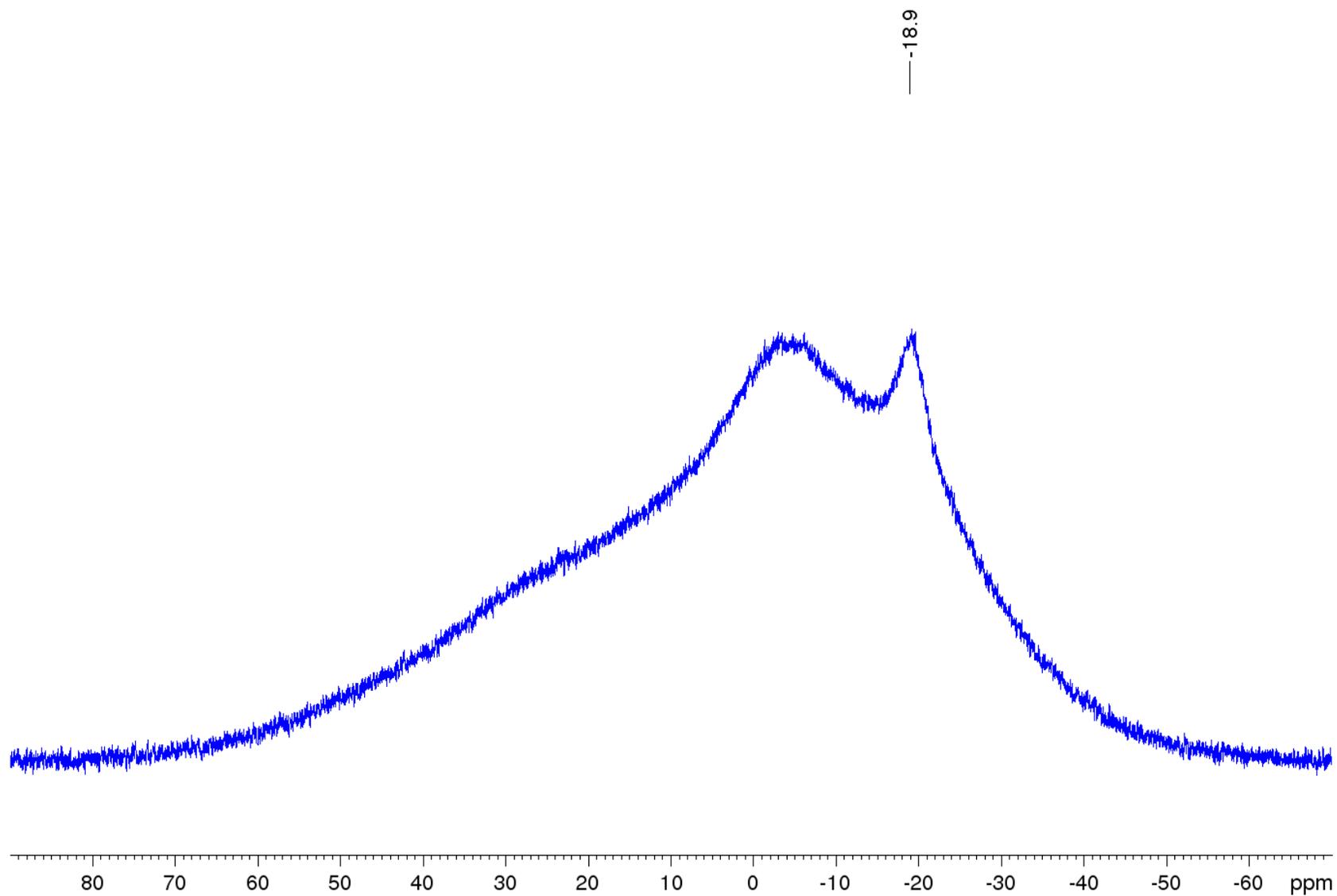
**Figure S17.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of the 3:2 isomer mixture (*E*)/(*Z*)- $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ . Only chemical shifts of the (*Z*)-isomer have been picked.



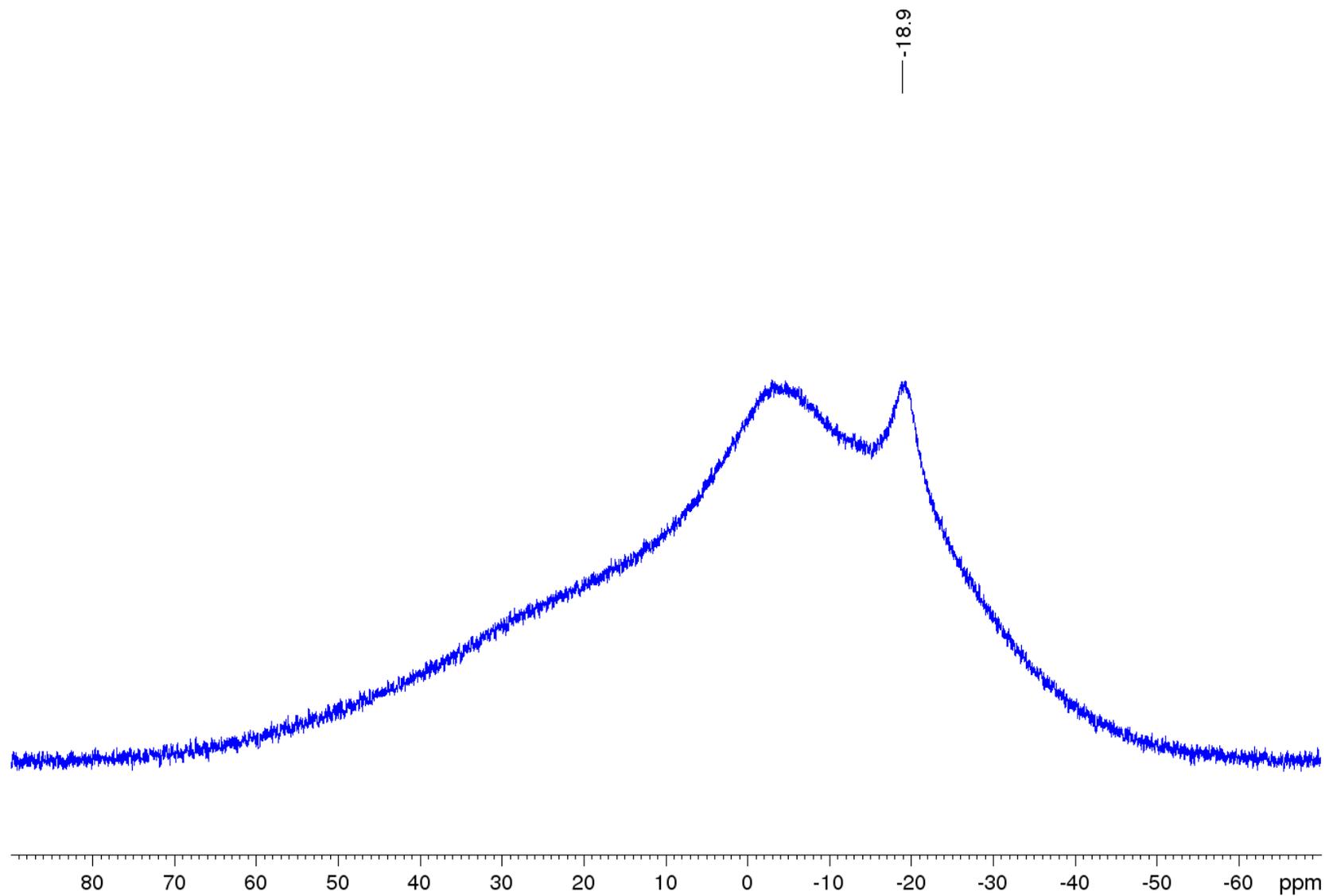
**Figure S18.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of the 3:2 isomer mixture of (*E*)- $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-W}$  (\*) and (*Z*)- $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



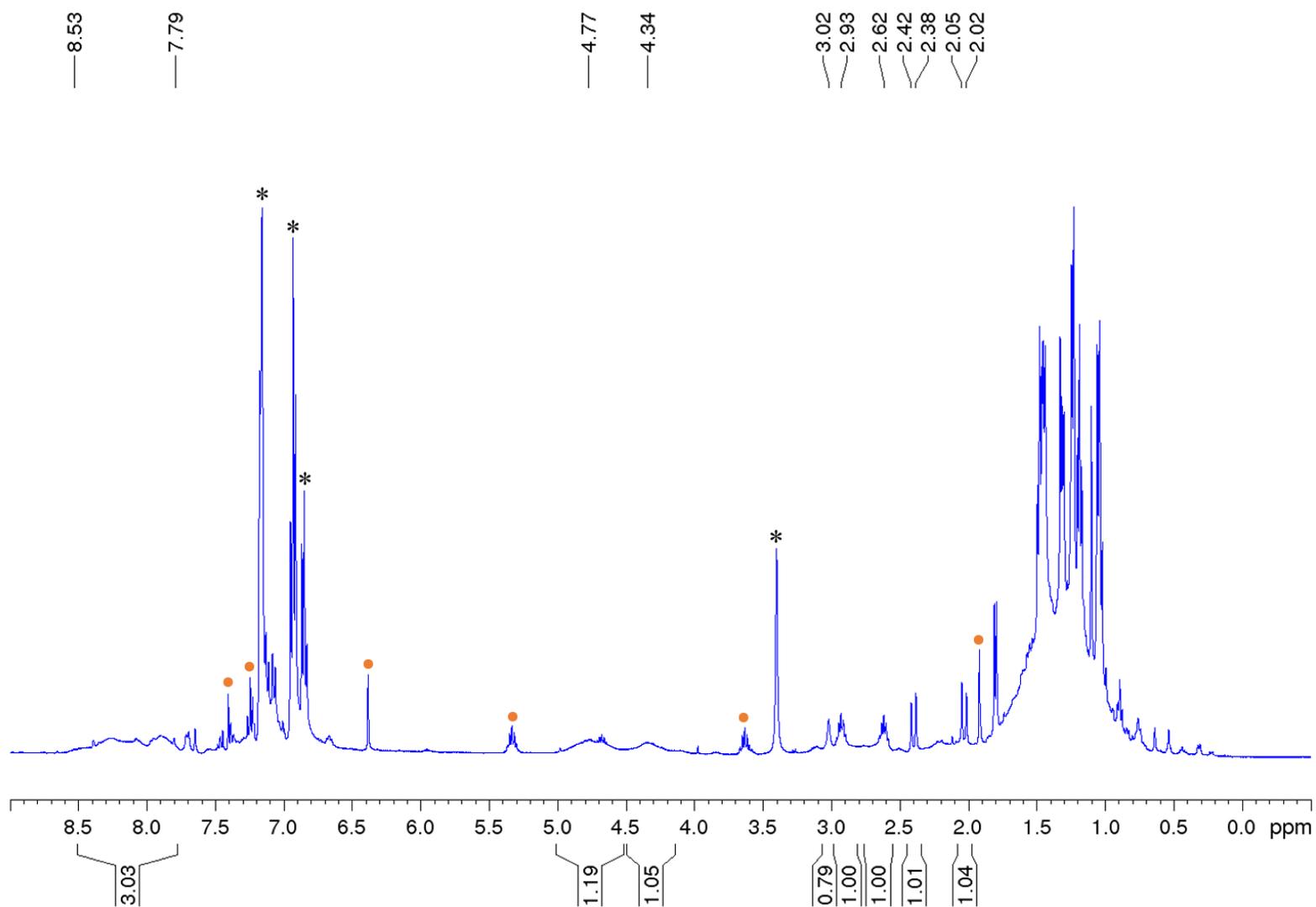
**Figure S19.**  $^1\text{H}\{^{11}\text{B}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  recorded *in situ* from the reaction mixture in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  with excess thiophenol. The additional resonances belong to residual thiophenol (\*).



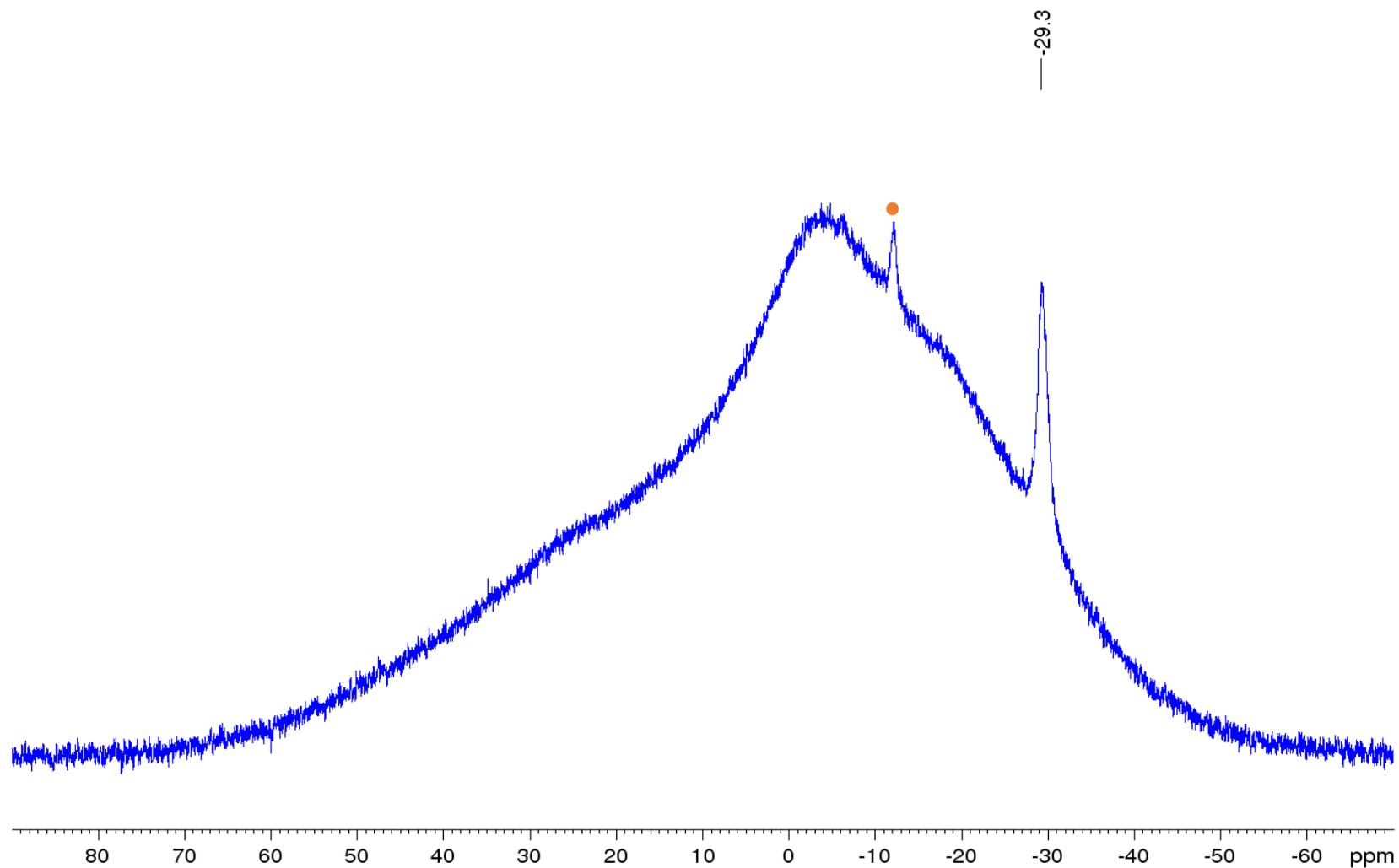
**Figure S20.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  recorded *in situ* from the reaction mixture in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  with excess thiophenol.



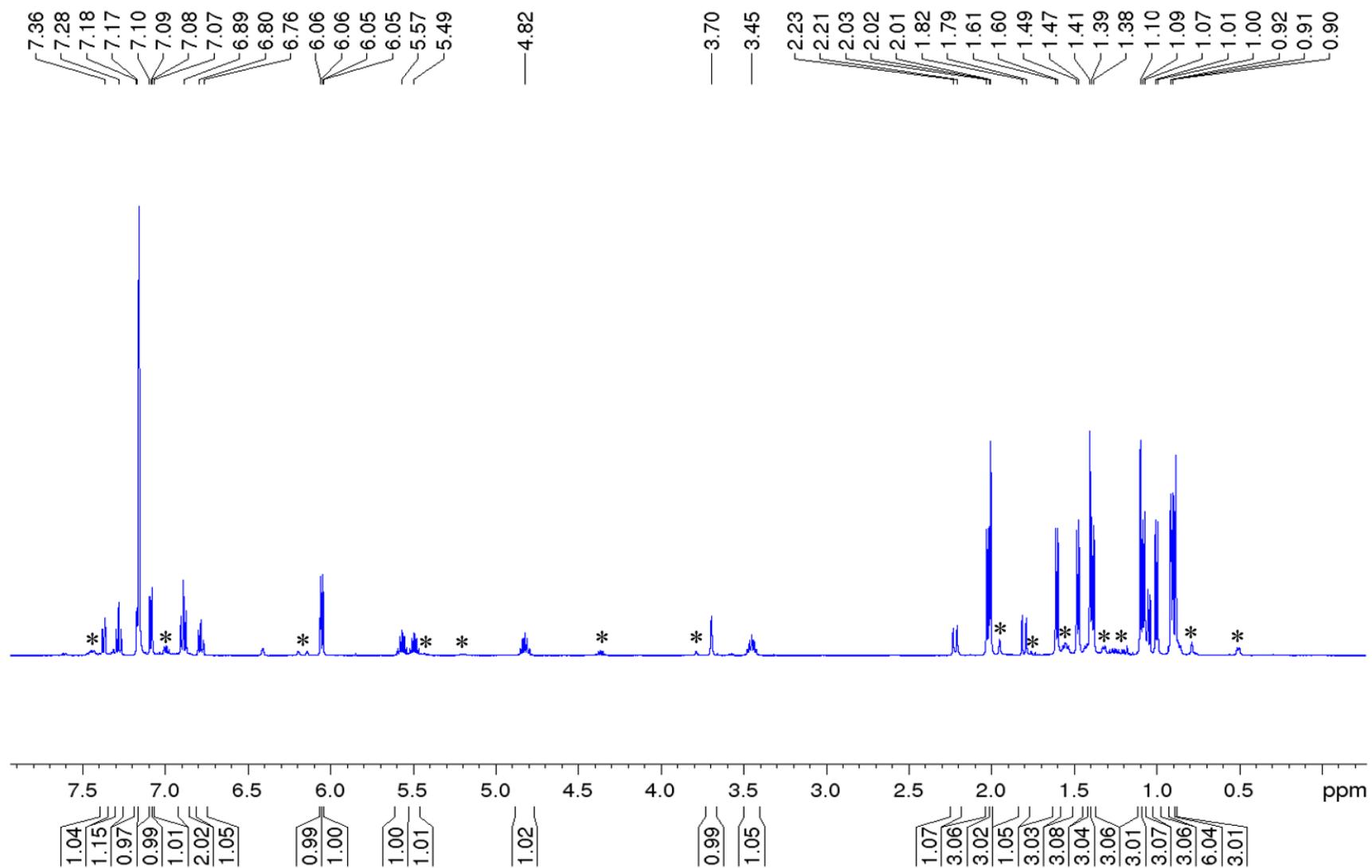
**Figure S21.**  $^{11}\text{B}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  recorded *in situ* from the reaction mixture in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  with excess thiophenol.



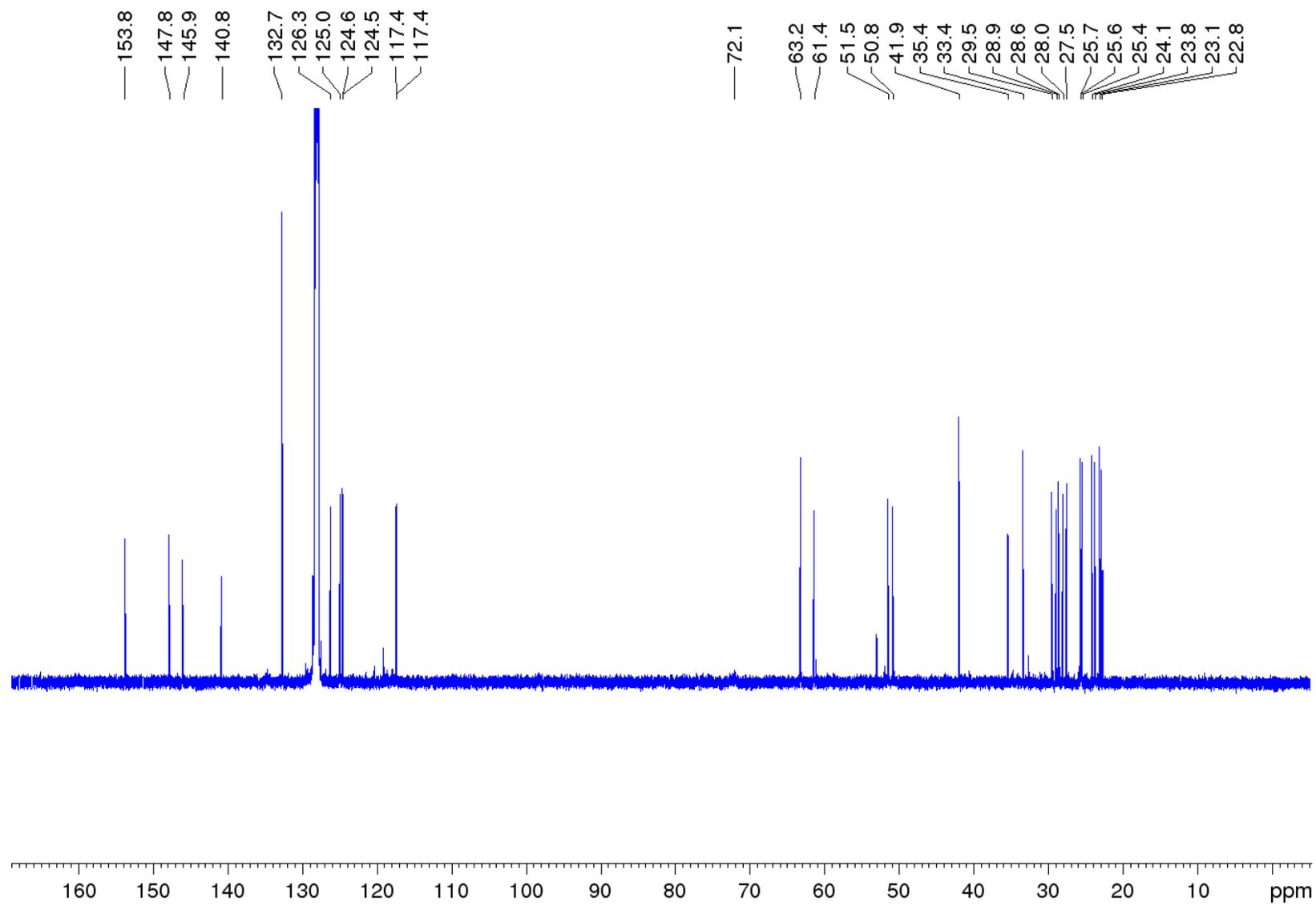
**Figure S22.**  $^1\text{H}\{^{11}\text{B}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $3^{\text{CN}}$  recorded *in situ* from the reaction mixture in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  with excess thiophenol. Additional resonances belong to residual thiophenol (\*) and (*Z*)- $2^{\text{CN}}$  (•). Only characteristic resonances in the region between ca. 2–9 ppm were assigned.



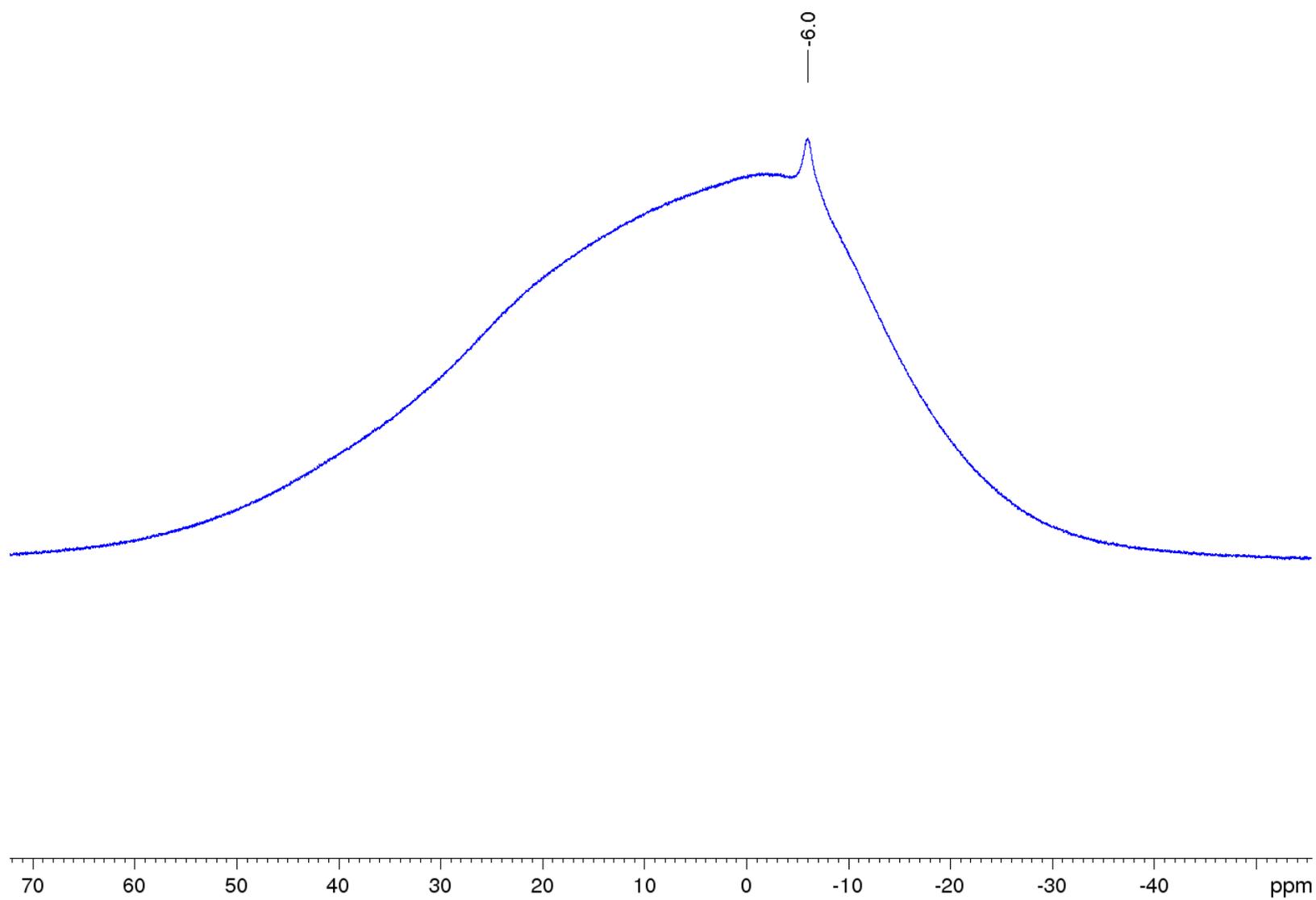
**Figure S23.** *In situ* recorded  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $3^{\text{CN}}$  recorded *in situ* from the reaction mixture in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  with excess thiophenol. The additional resonance belongs to residual (*Z*)- $2^{\text{CN}}$  (•).



**Figure S24.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of  $4^{\text{NCS}}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ . Only chemical shifts and integrals of the major diastereomer (85%) have been picked. The additional resonances belong to the minor diastereomer (\*).



**Figure S25.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of  $4^{\text{NCS}}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



**Figure S26.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of  $4^{\text{NCS}}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .

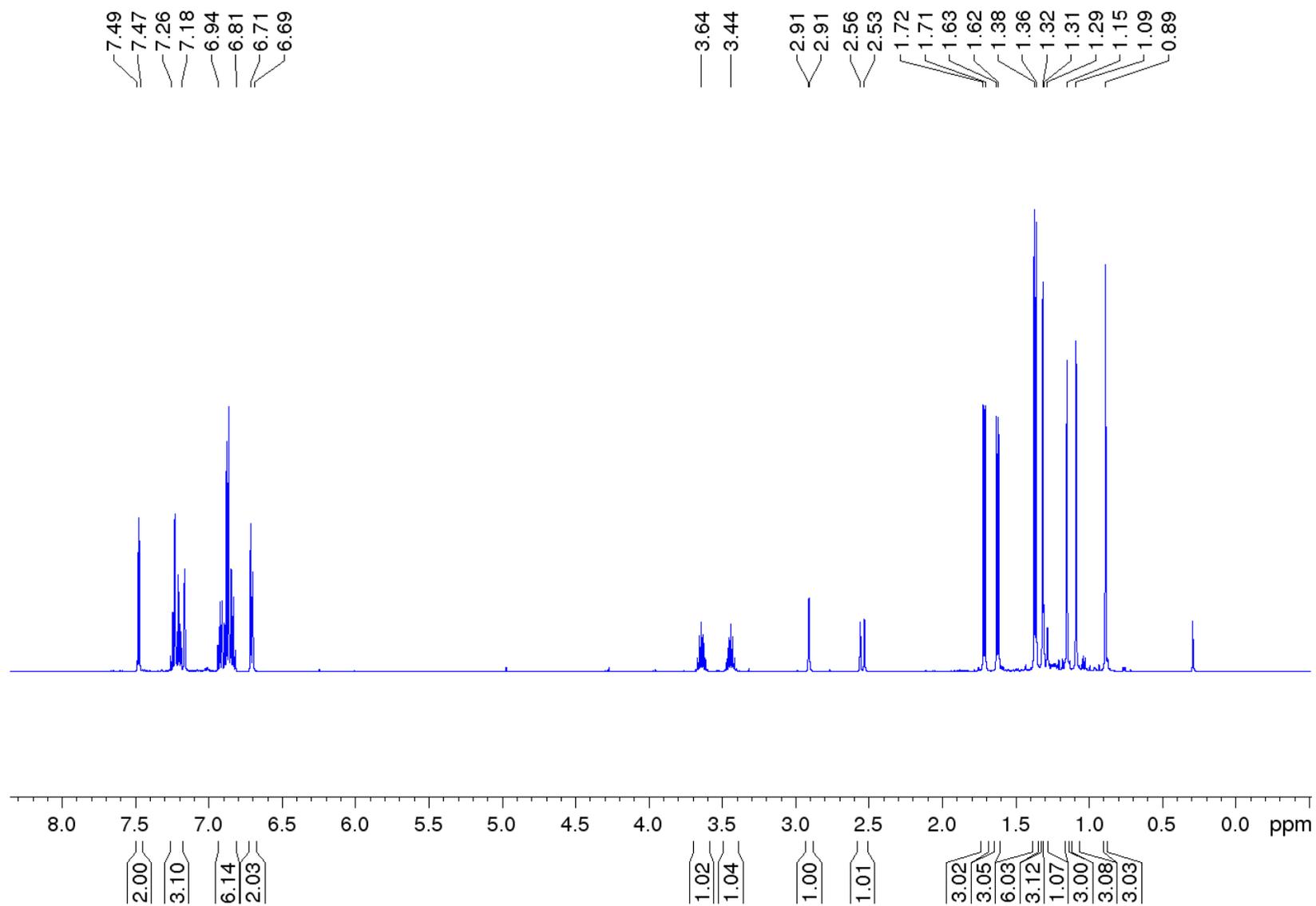
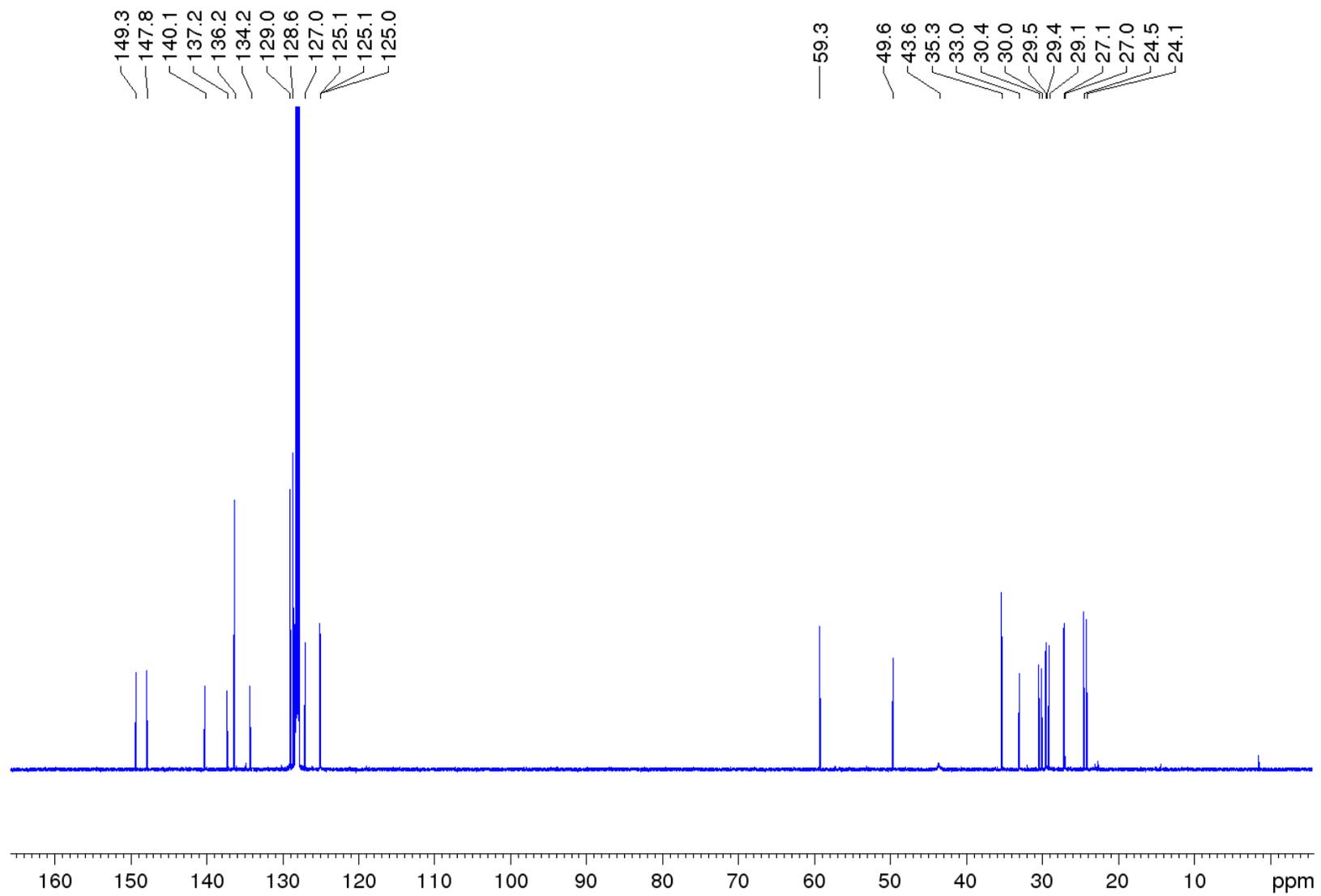
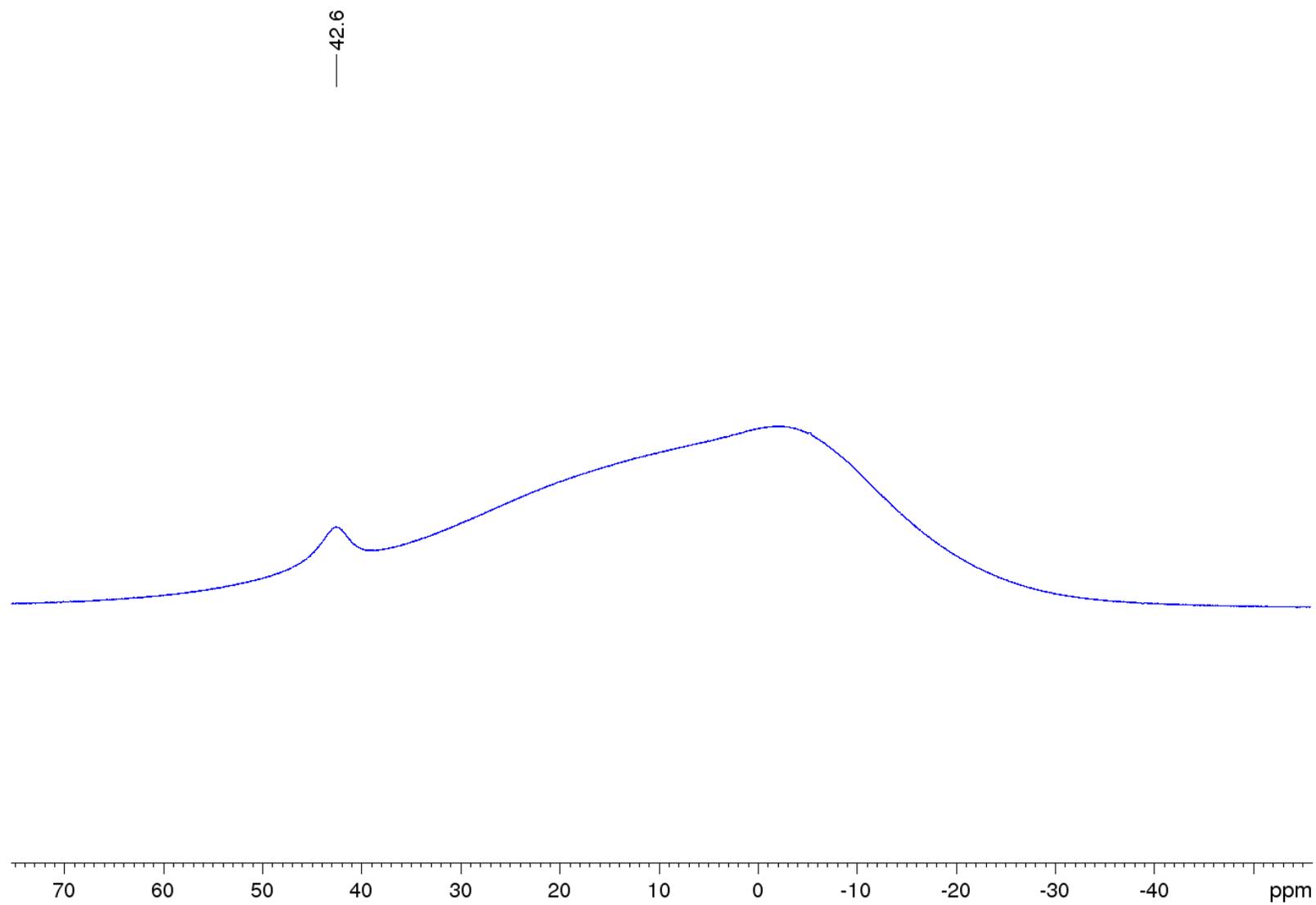


Figure S27. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **5** in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>.

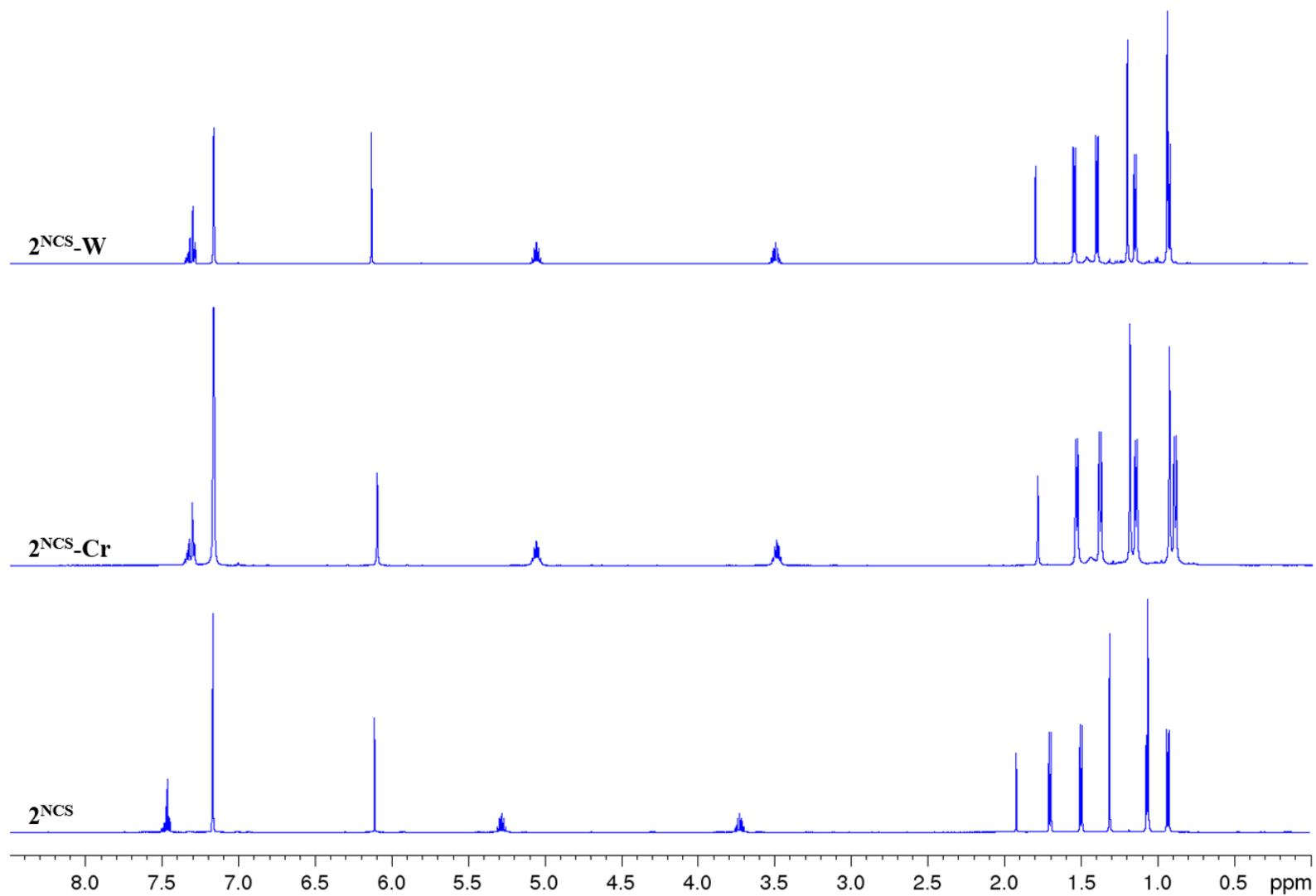


**Figure S28.**  $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$  NMR spectrum of **5** in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .



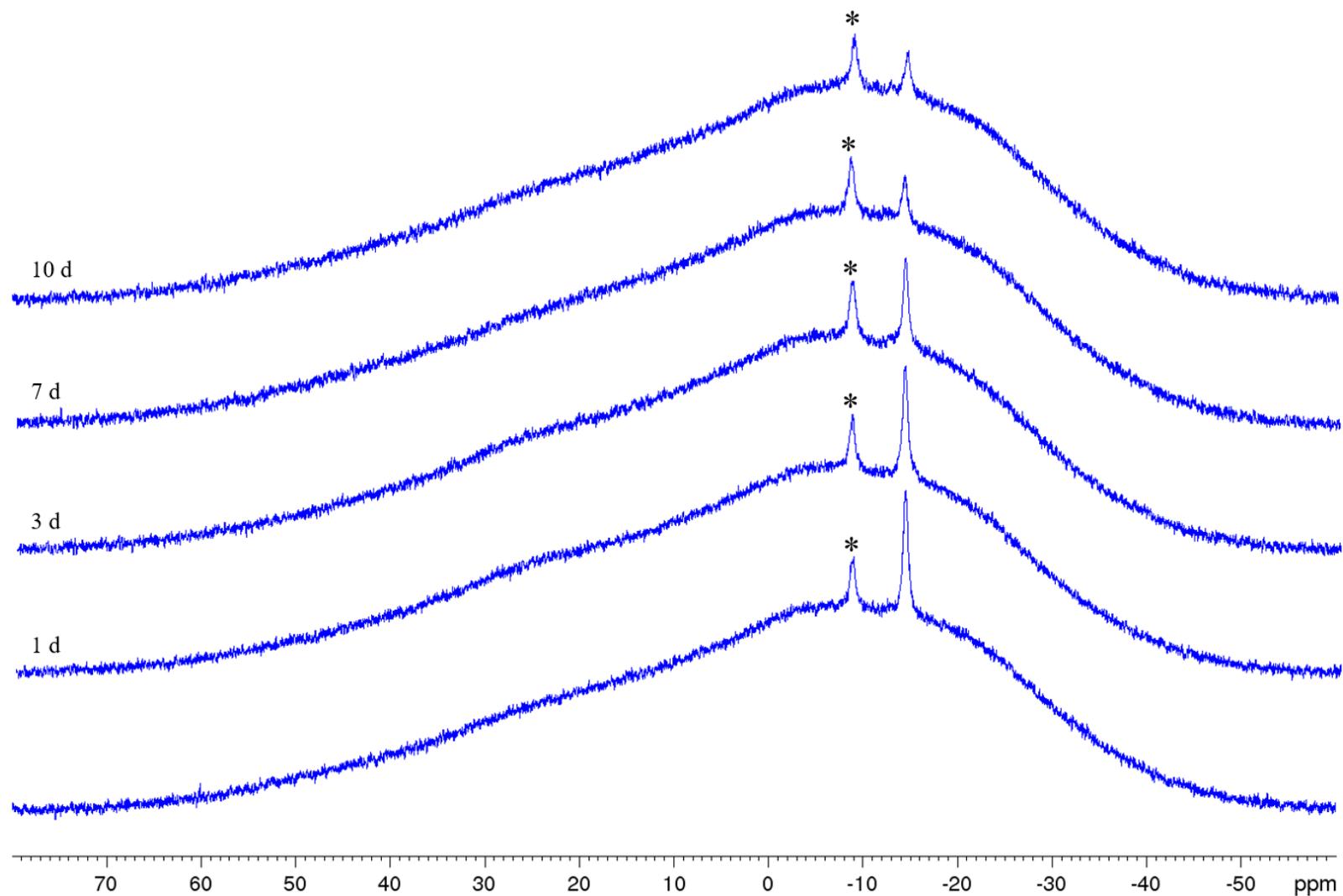
**Figure S29.**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of **5** in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .

Stack-plot of  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of  $2^{\text{NCS}}$ ,  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  and  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$

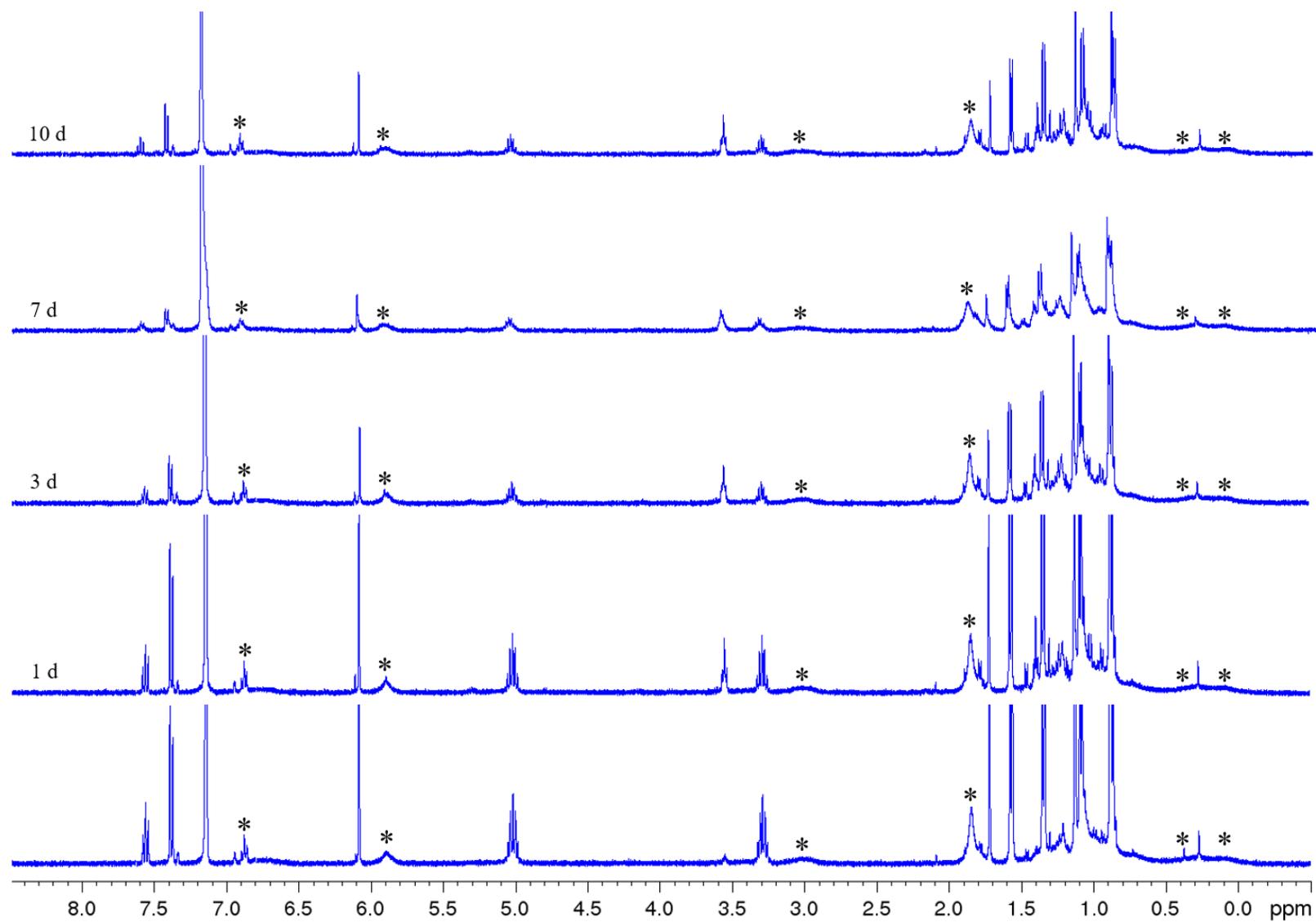


**Figure S30.** Stack-plot of  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of  $2^{\text{NCS}}$ ,  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  and  $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$  in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .

NMR studies of the *E/Z* isomerisation of 2<sup>CN</sup>-W

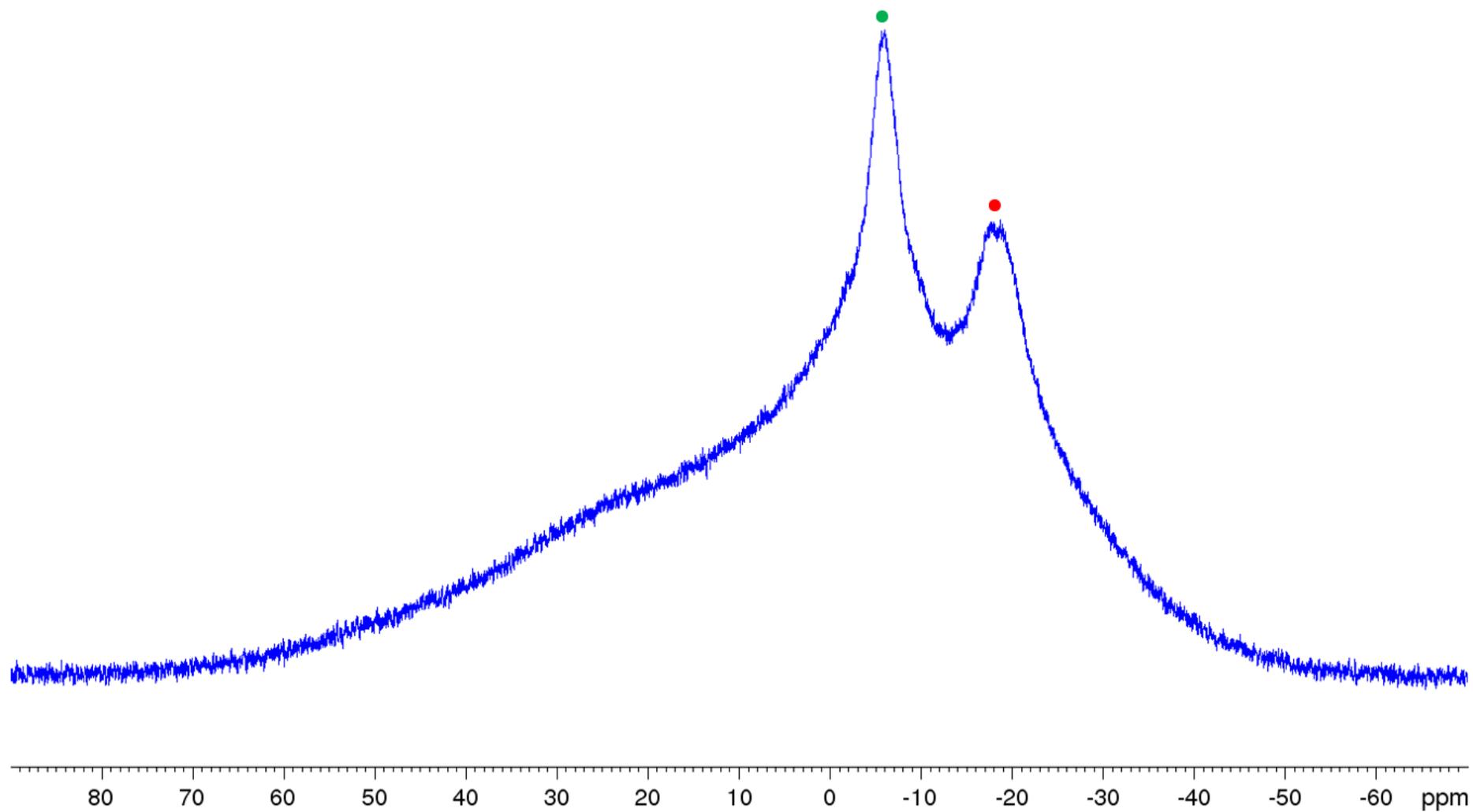


**Figure S31.** Stack-plot of <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectra for the thermal conversion of (*Z*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W to (*E*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W (\*) in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> at 60 °C.

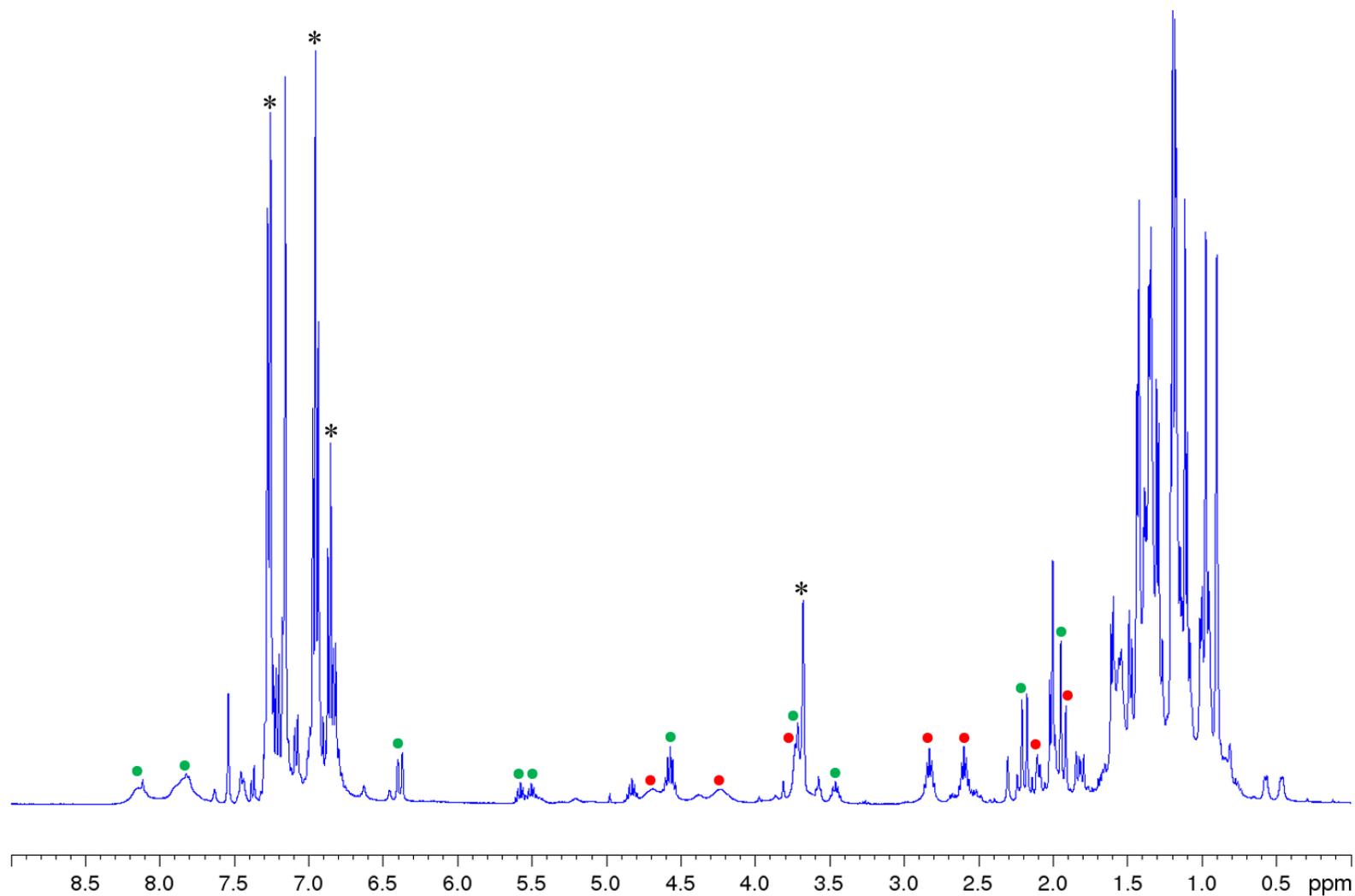


**Figure S32.** Stack-plot of <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra for the thermal conversion of (*Z*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-**W** to (*E*)-2<sup>CN</sup>-**W** (\*) in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> at 60 °C.

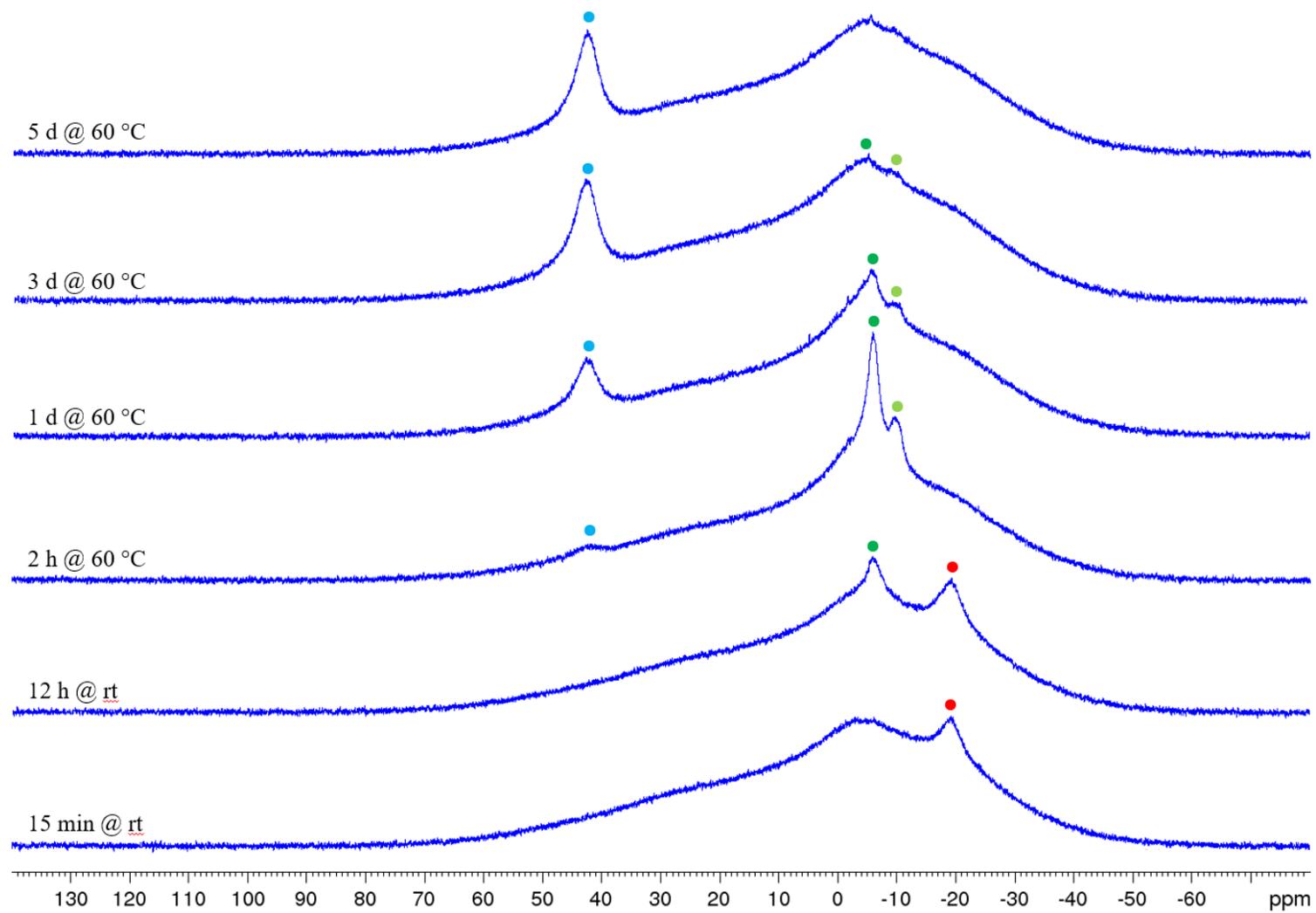
**NMR studies of the irreversible protonation of (Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup> by PhSH**



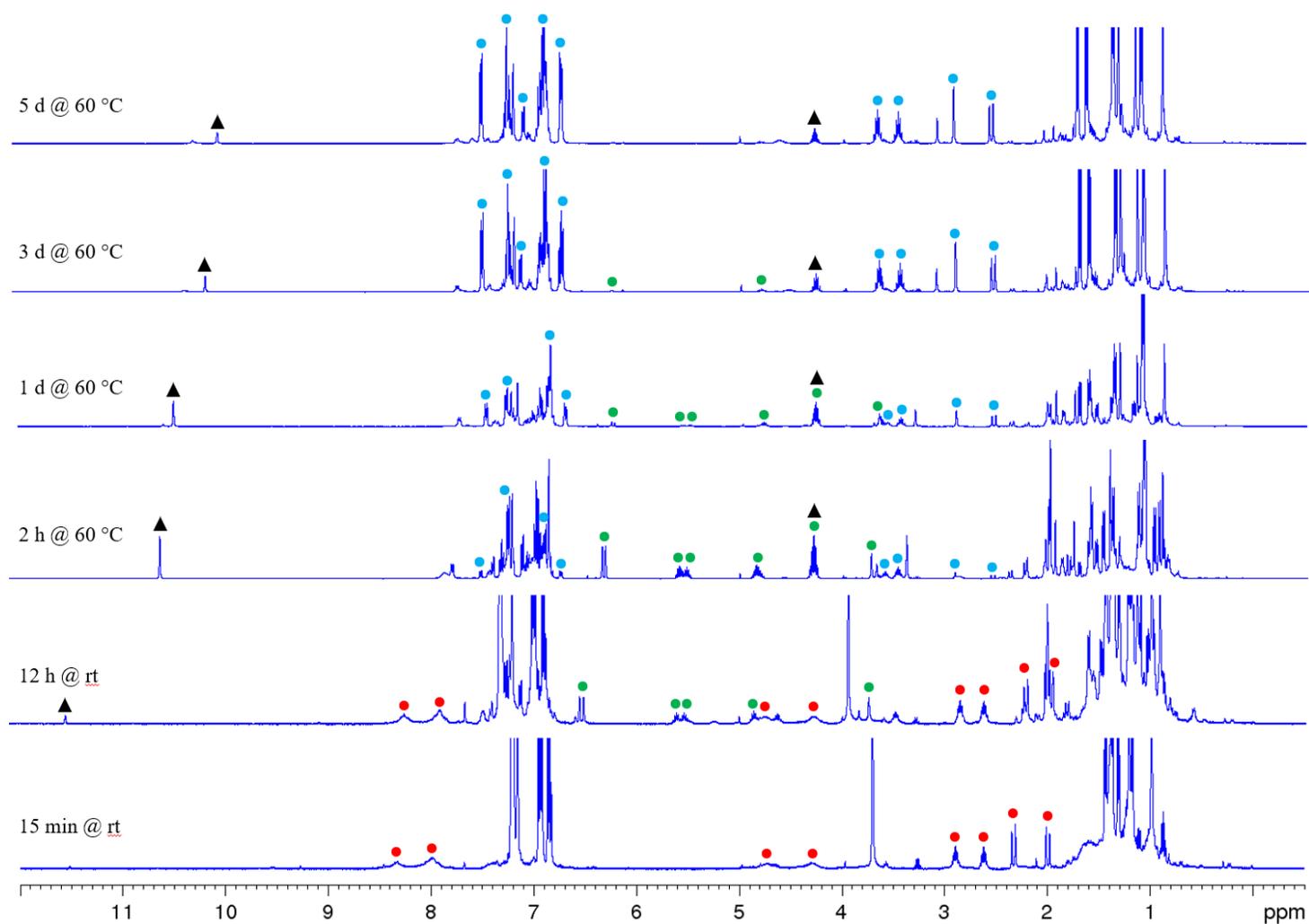
**Figure S33.** <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectrum of the conversion of (Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup> to 3<sup>NCS</sup> (●) and 4<sup>NCS</sup> (●) recorded *in situ* in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub> after 12 h at room temperature.



**Figure S34.**  $^1\text{H}\{^{11}\text{B}\}$  NMR spectrum of the conversion of (*Z*)- $2^{\text{NCS}}$  to  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  (●) and  $4^{\text{NCS}}$  (●) recorded *in situ* in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$  after 12 h at room temperature. The additional resonances belong to residual thiophenol (\*). Only characteristic resonances in the region between ca. 2–9 ppm were assigned. See  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  and  $4^{\text{NCS}}$ , respectively, for full assignment.

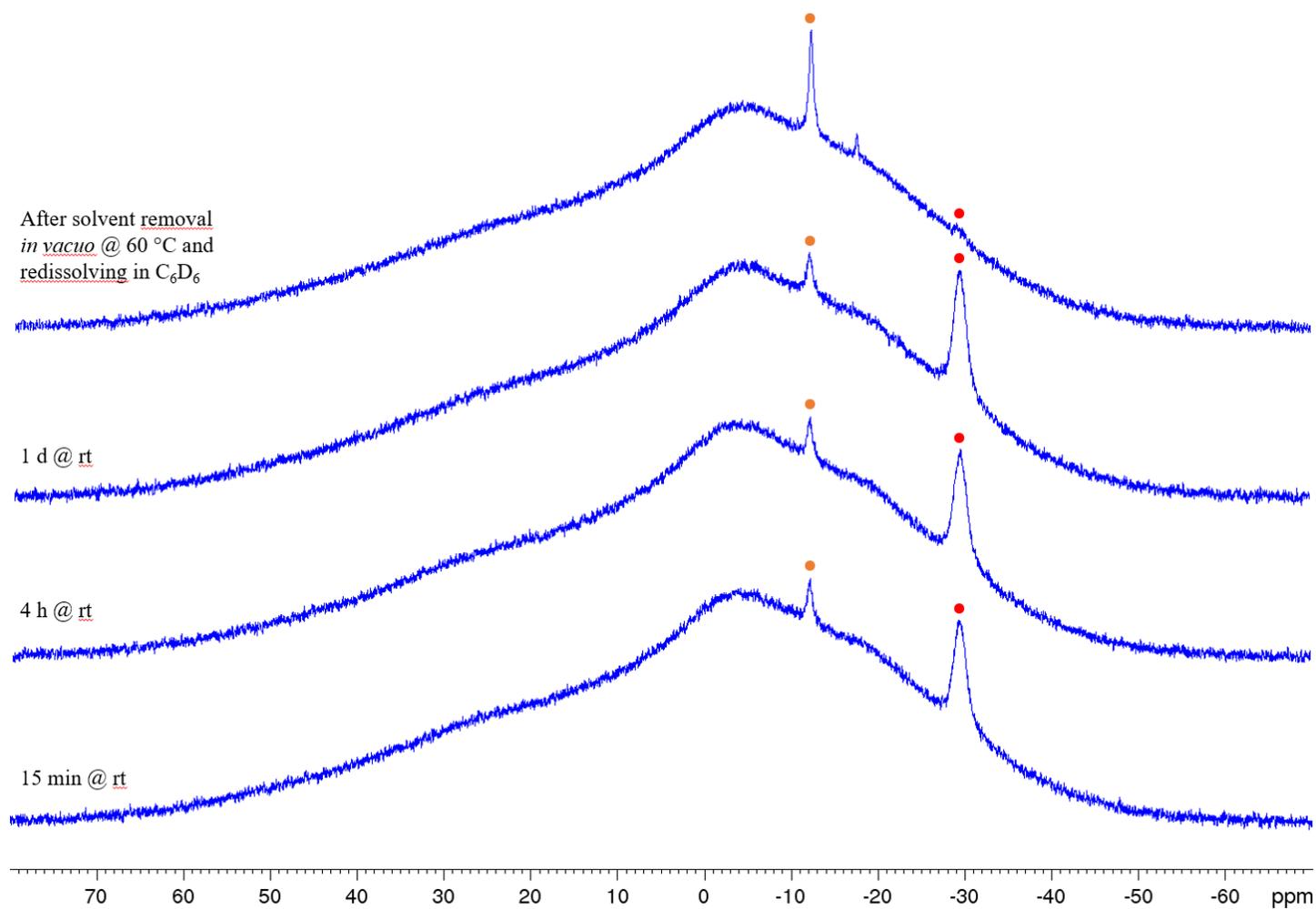


**Figure S35.** Stack-plot of  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectra of the conversion of **(Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup>** to **5** (●) via **3<sup>NCS</sup>** (●) and **4<sup>NCS</sup>** (major diastereomer●, minor diastereomer●) in  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ .

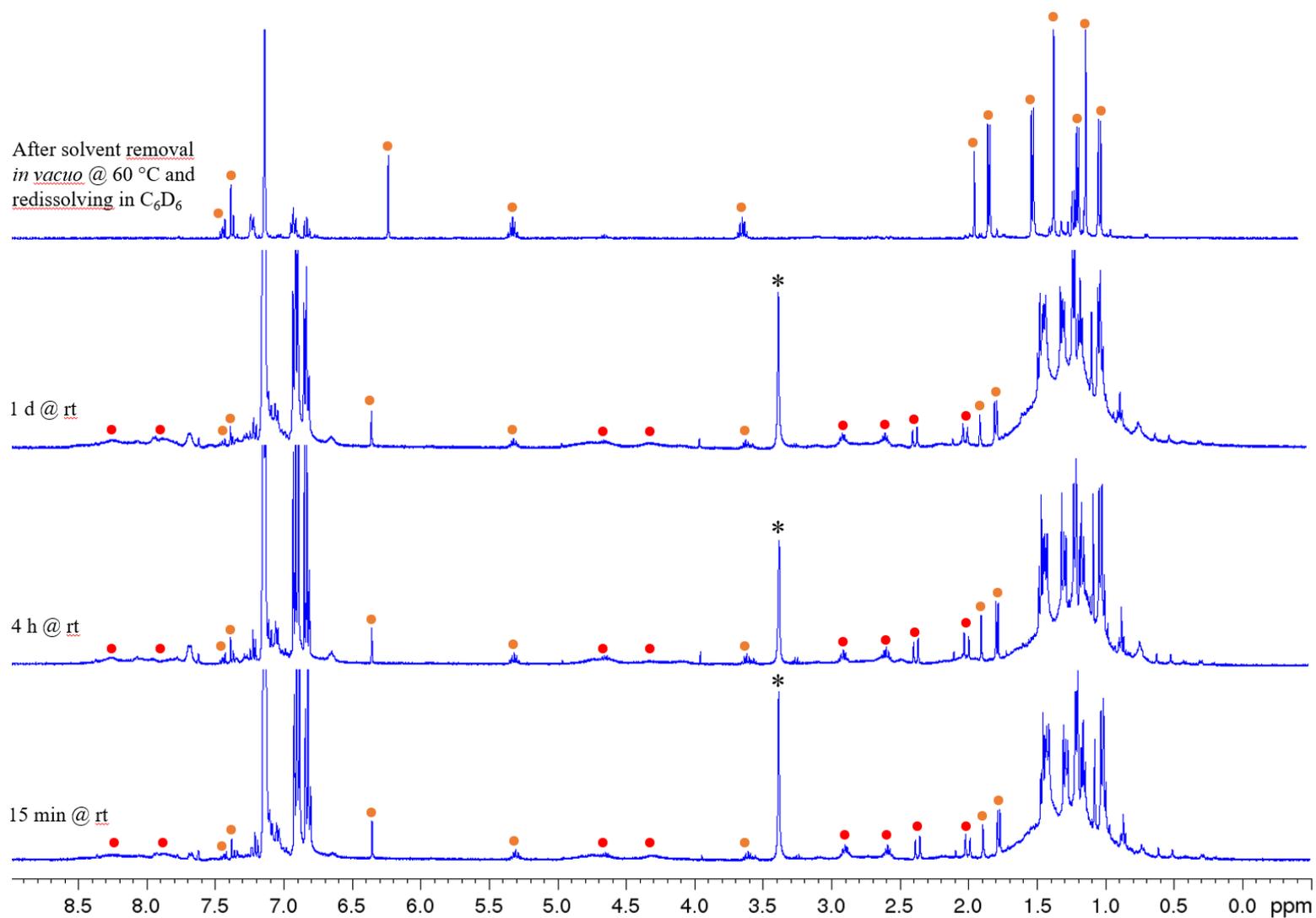


**Figure S36.** Stack-plot of <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra of the conversion of (*Z*)-2<sup>NCS</sup> to 5 (●) via 3<sup>NCS</sup> (●) and 4<sup>NCS</sup> (major diastereomer only ●) and the formation of [iPr-H][NCS] (▲ in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>). Only characteristic resonances in the region between ca. 2–11 ppm were assigned. See <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra of 3<sup>NCS</sup>, 4<sup>NCS</sup> and 5, respectively, for full assignment.

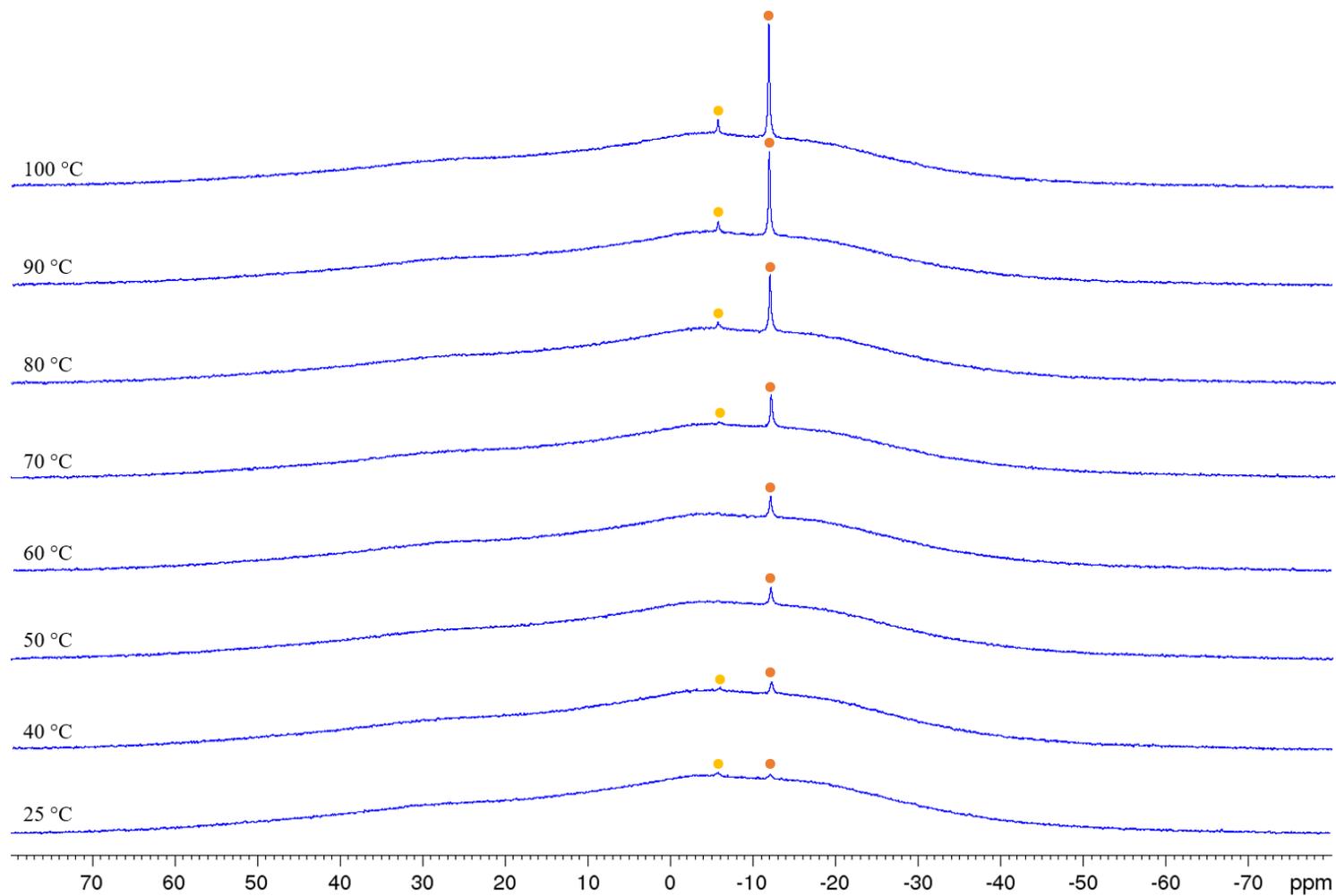
## NMR studies of the reversible protonation of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup> by PhSH



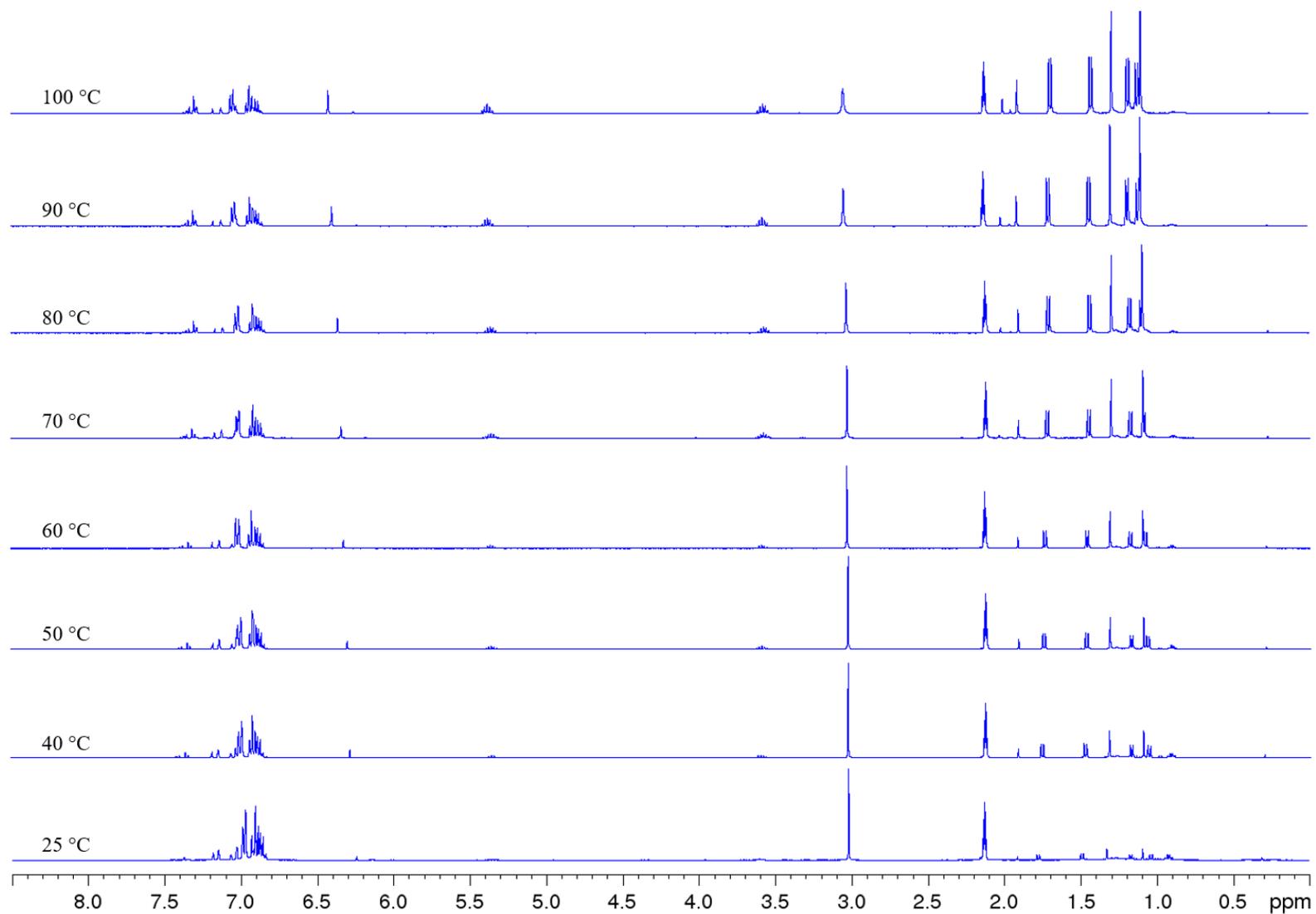
**Figure S37.** Stack-plot of <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectra of the reversible reaction of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup> (●) and thiophenol to 3<sup>CN</sup> (●) in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>. The additional resonance at -17 ppm belongs to an unidentified decomposition product.



**Figure S38.** Stack-plot of <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra of the reversible reaction of (*Z*)-**2**<sup>CN</sup> (●) and thiophenol (\*) to **3**<sup>CN</sup> (●) in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>. Only characteristic resonances in the region between ca. 2–9 ppm were assigned.

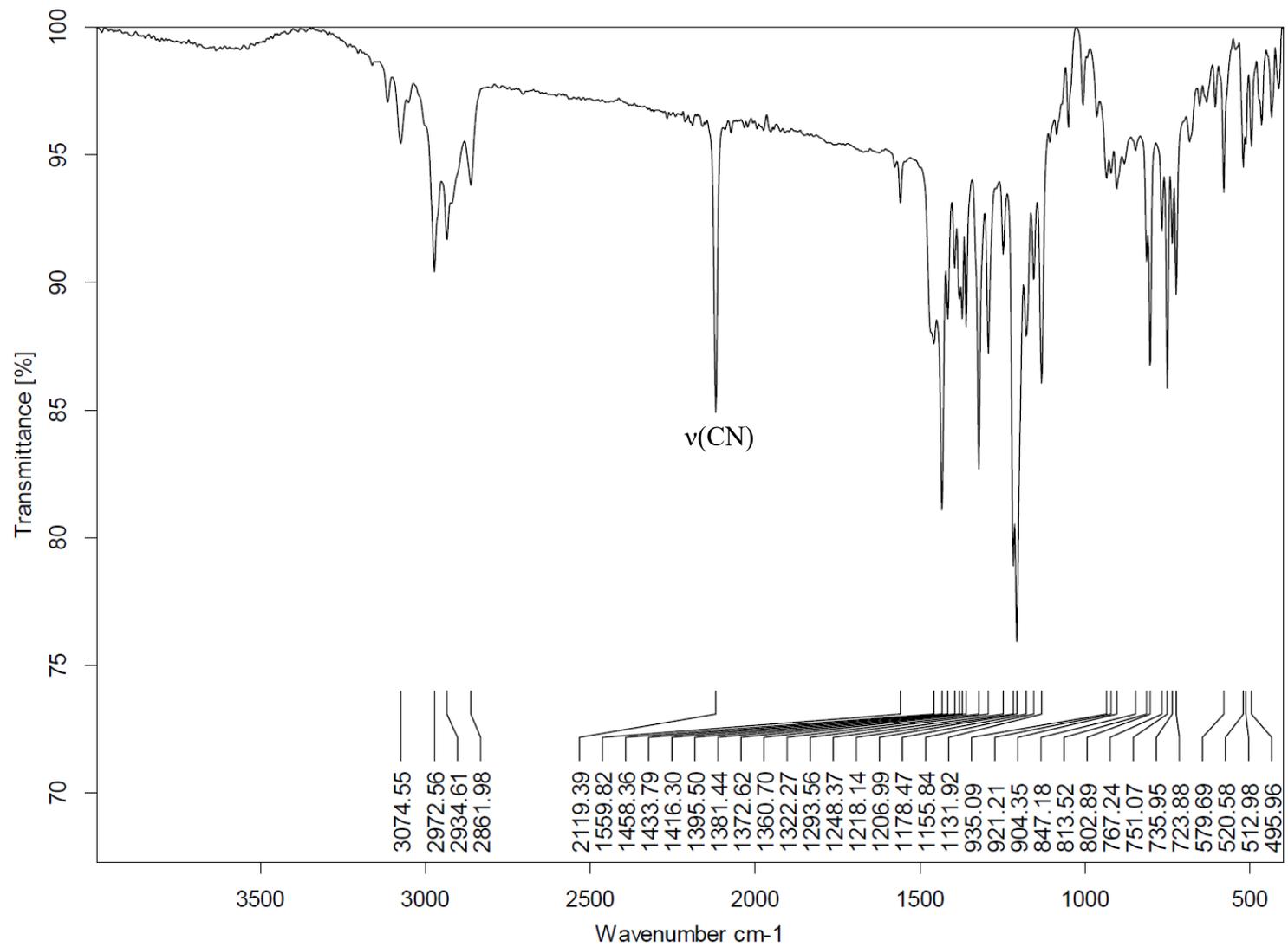


**Figure S39.** Stack-plot of  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectra of the reversible protonation of (*Z*)- $2^{\text{CN}}$  (●) with thiophenol in toluene- $\text{d}_8$  from 25 to 100 °C. The resonance of  $3^{\text{CN}}$  was not observed due to quantitative precipitation. The additional resonance at  $-5.4$  ppm was assigned to the isomer (*E*)- $2^{\text{CN}}$  (●).

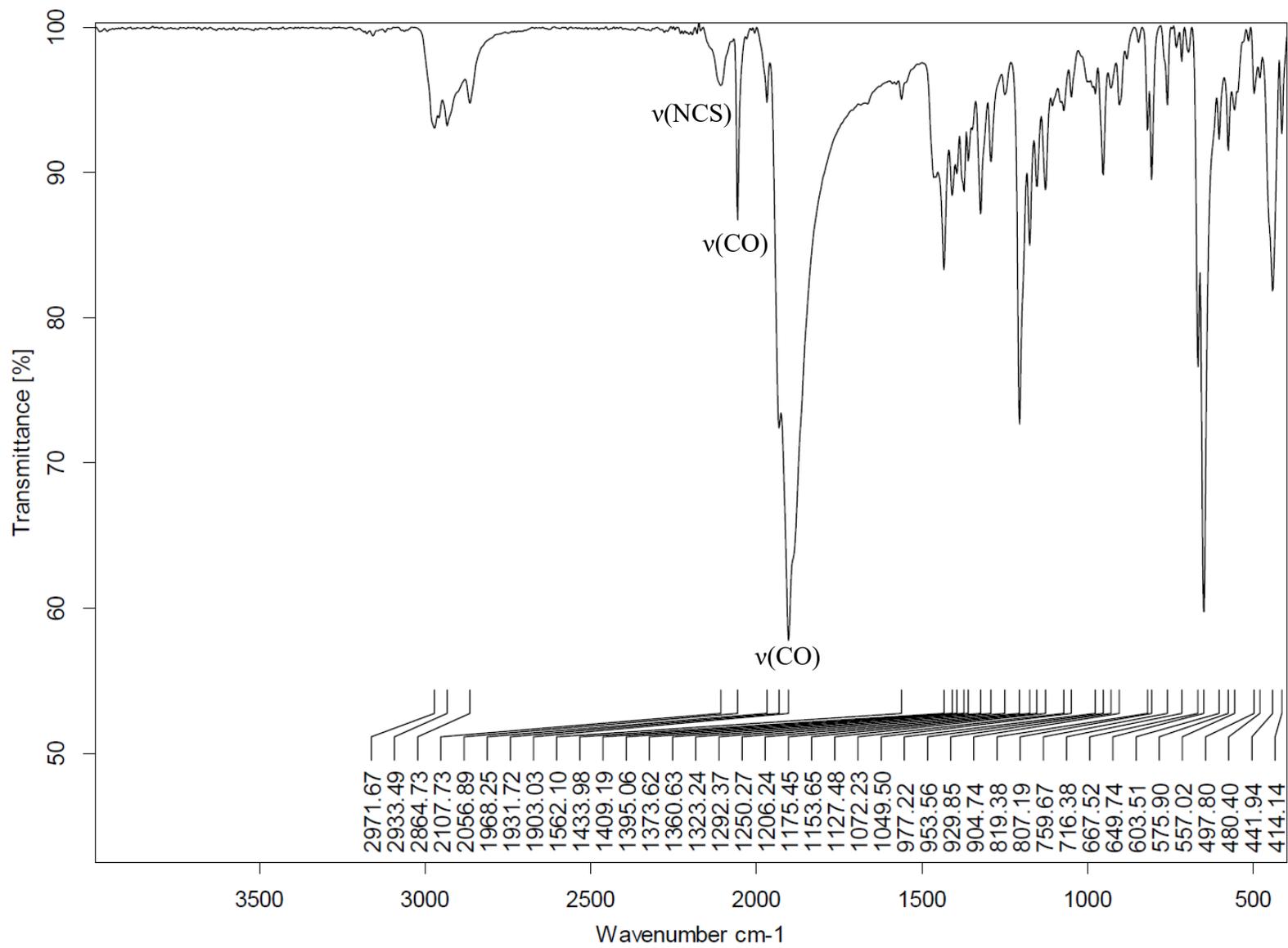


**Figure S40.** Stack-plot of  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of the reversible protonation of  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}}$  with thiophenol in toluene- $d_8$  from 25 to 100  $^\circ\text{C}$ . The resonances of  $3^{\text{CN}}$  were not observed due to quantitative precipitation.

## IR spectra



**Figure S41.** Solid-state IR spectrum of **(Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>**.



**Figure S42.** Solid-state IR spectrum of  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$ .

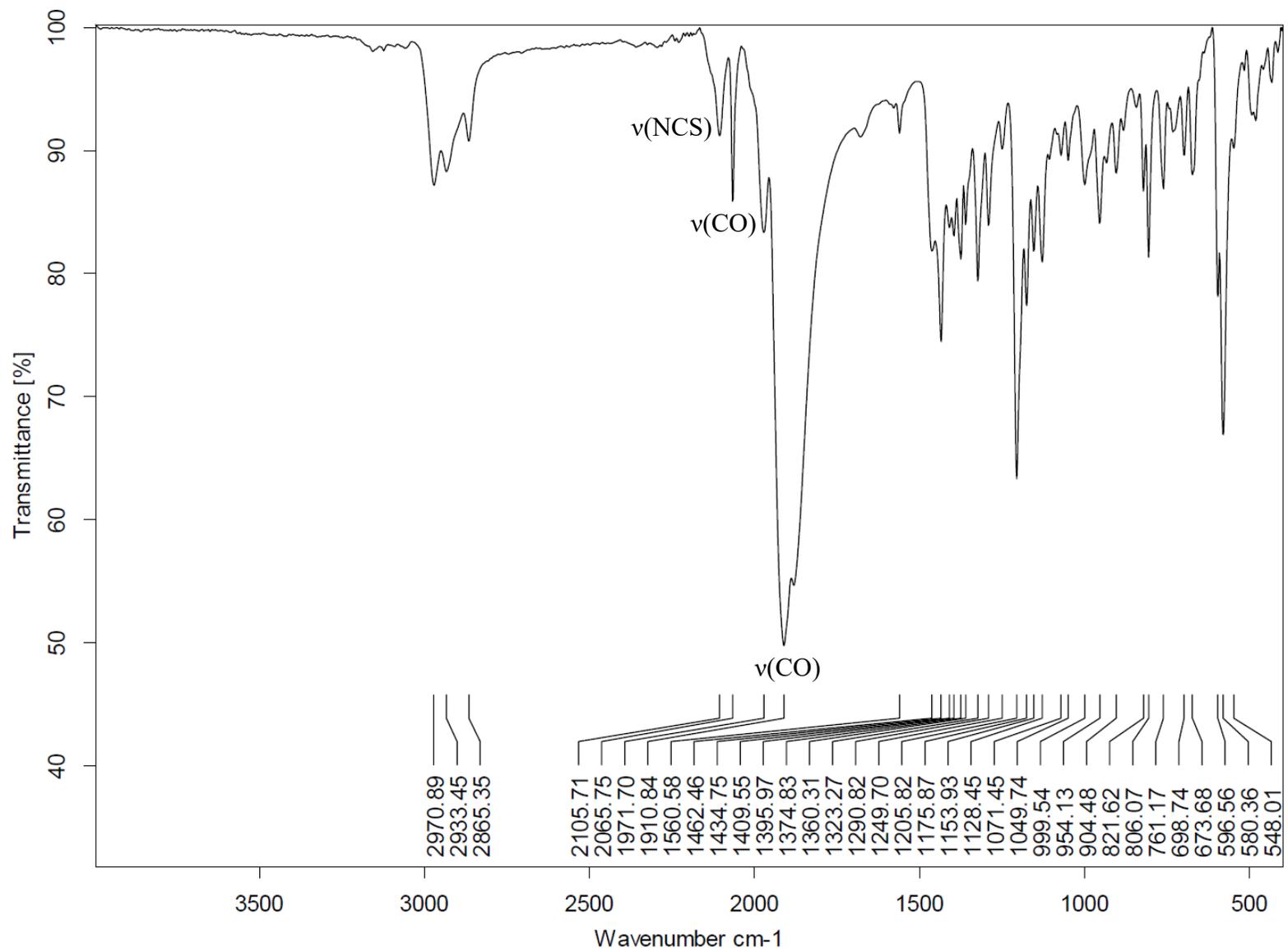


Figure S43. Solid-state IR spectrum of (Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup>-W.

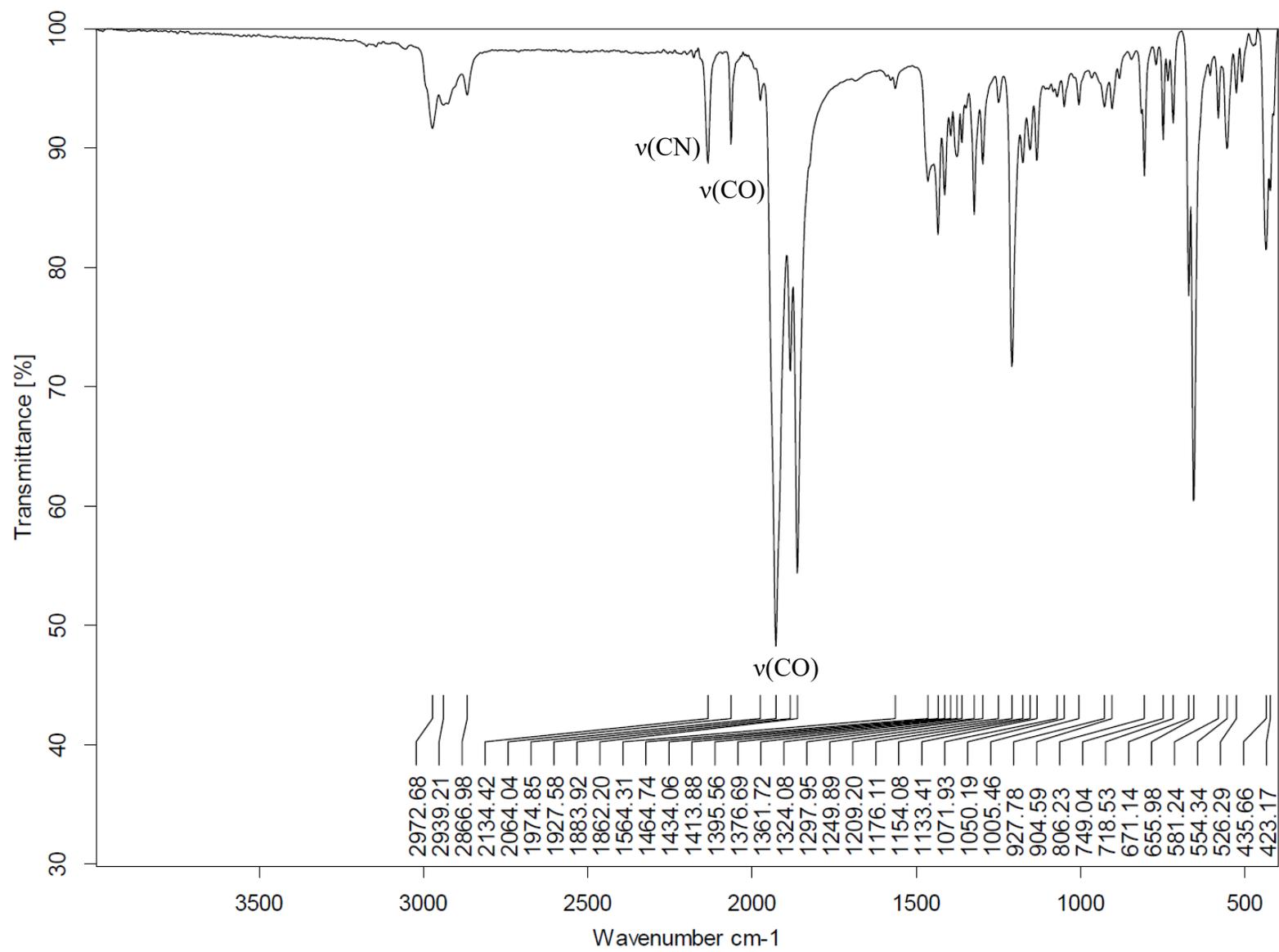


Figure S44. Solid-state IR spectrum of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-Cr.

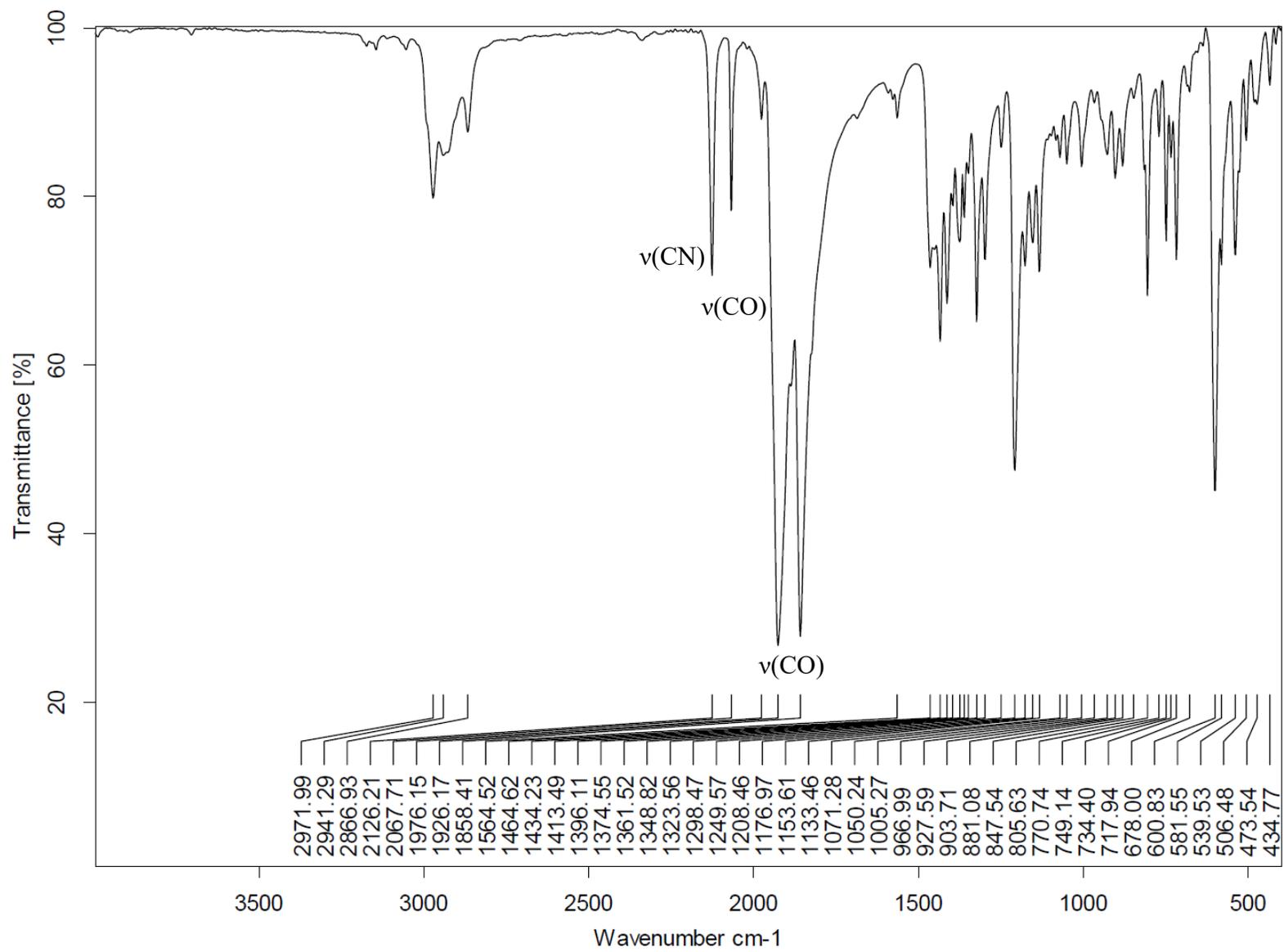


Figure S45. Solid-state IR spectrum of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo.

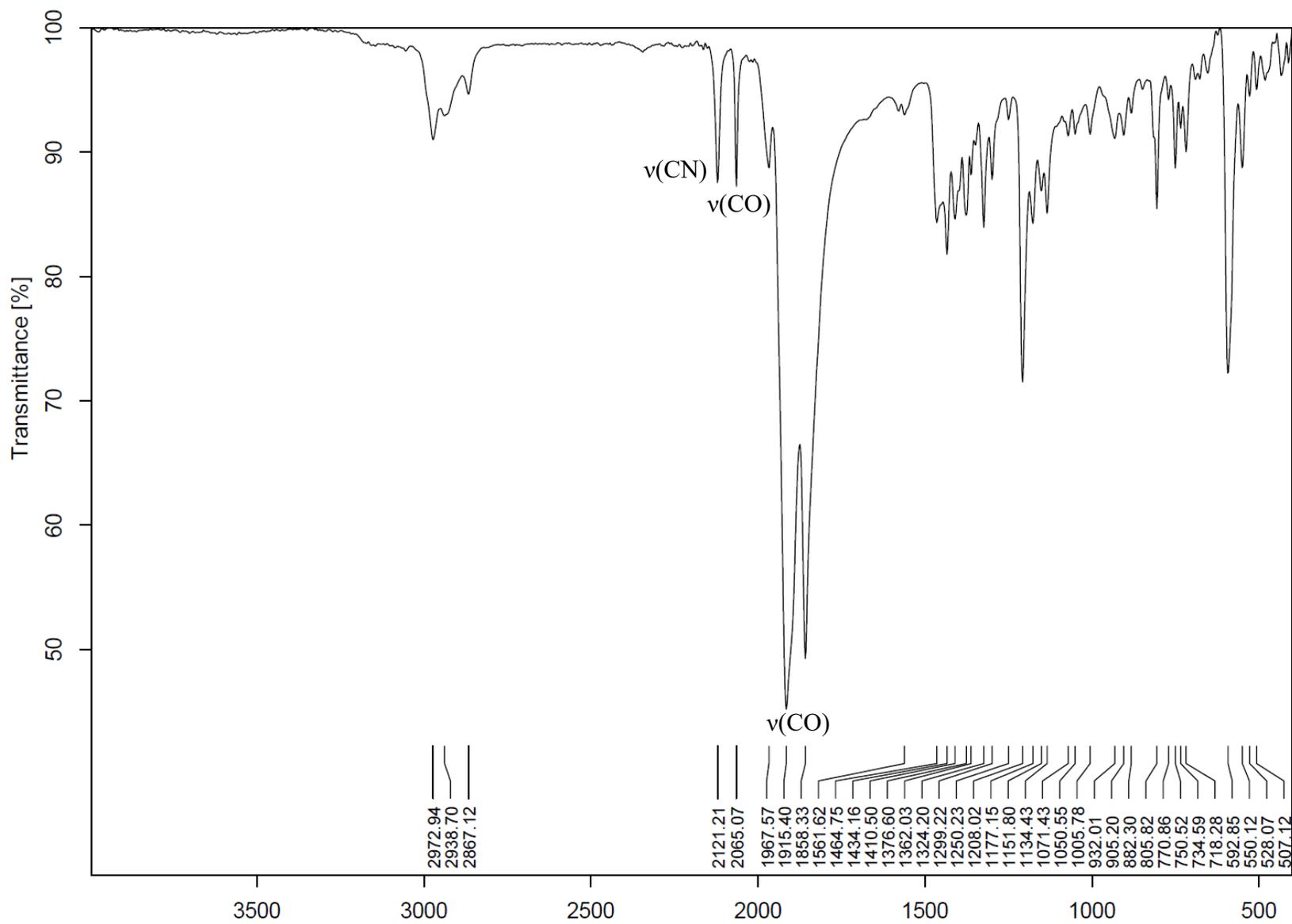
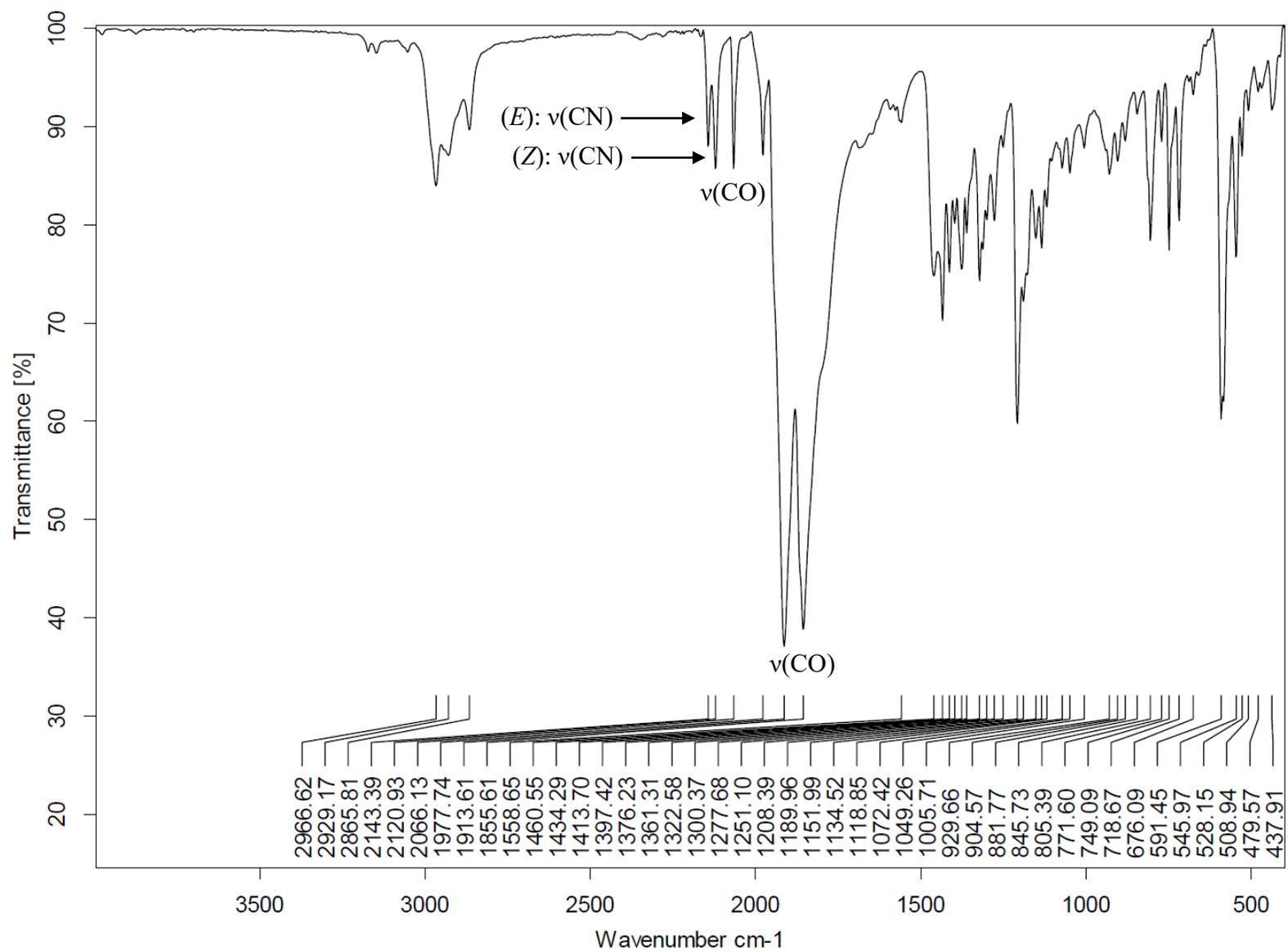


Figure S46. Solid-state IR spectrum of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W directly after workup.



**Figure S47.** Solid-state IR spectrum of a mixture of both isomers of  $(E)/(Z)$ - $2^{CN}$ -**W**.

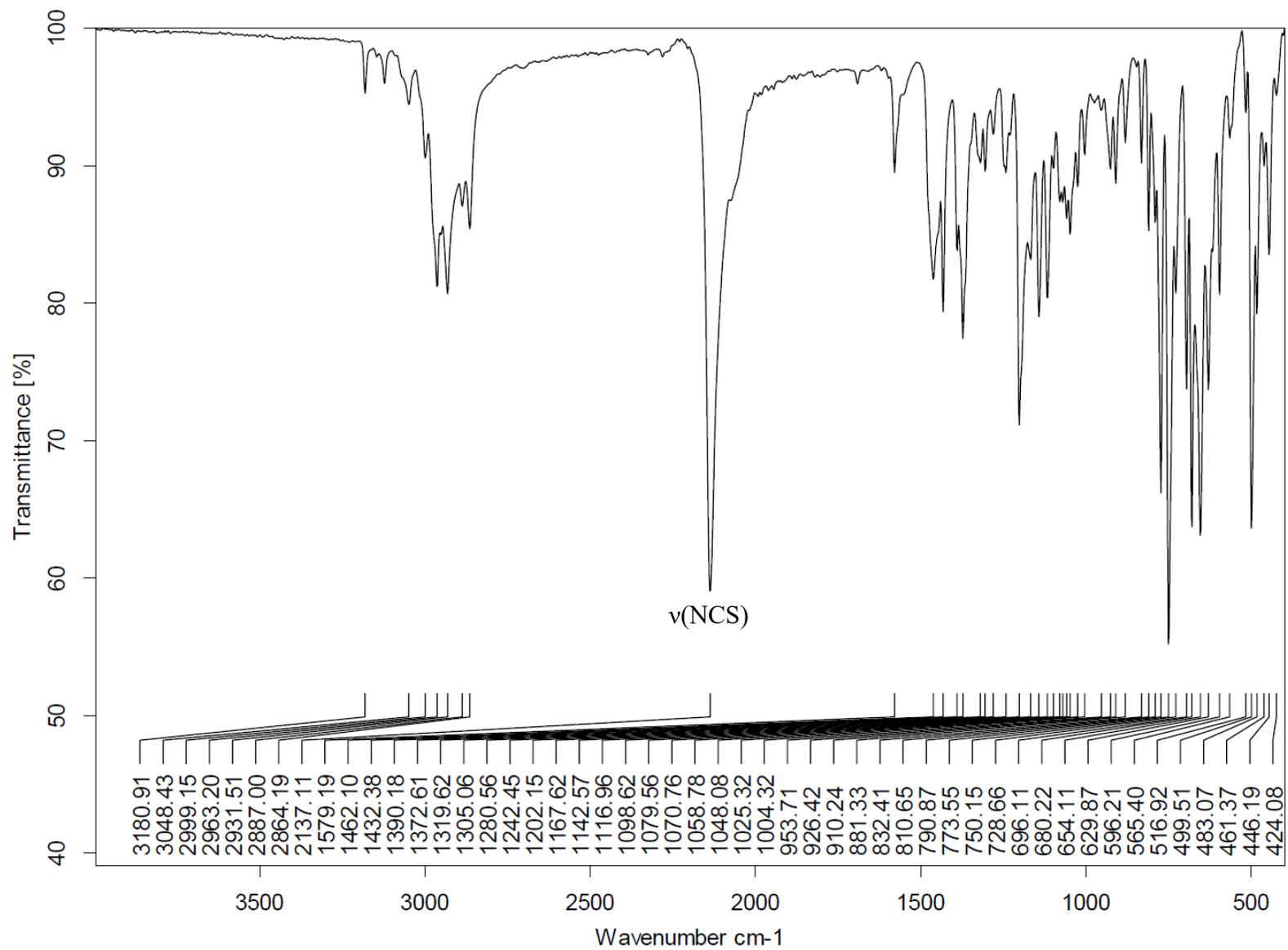
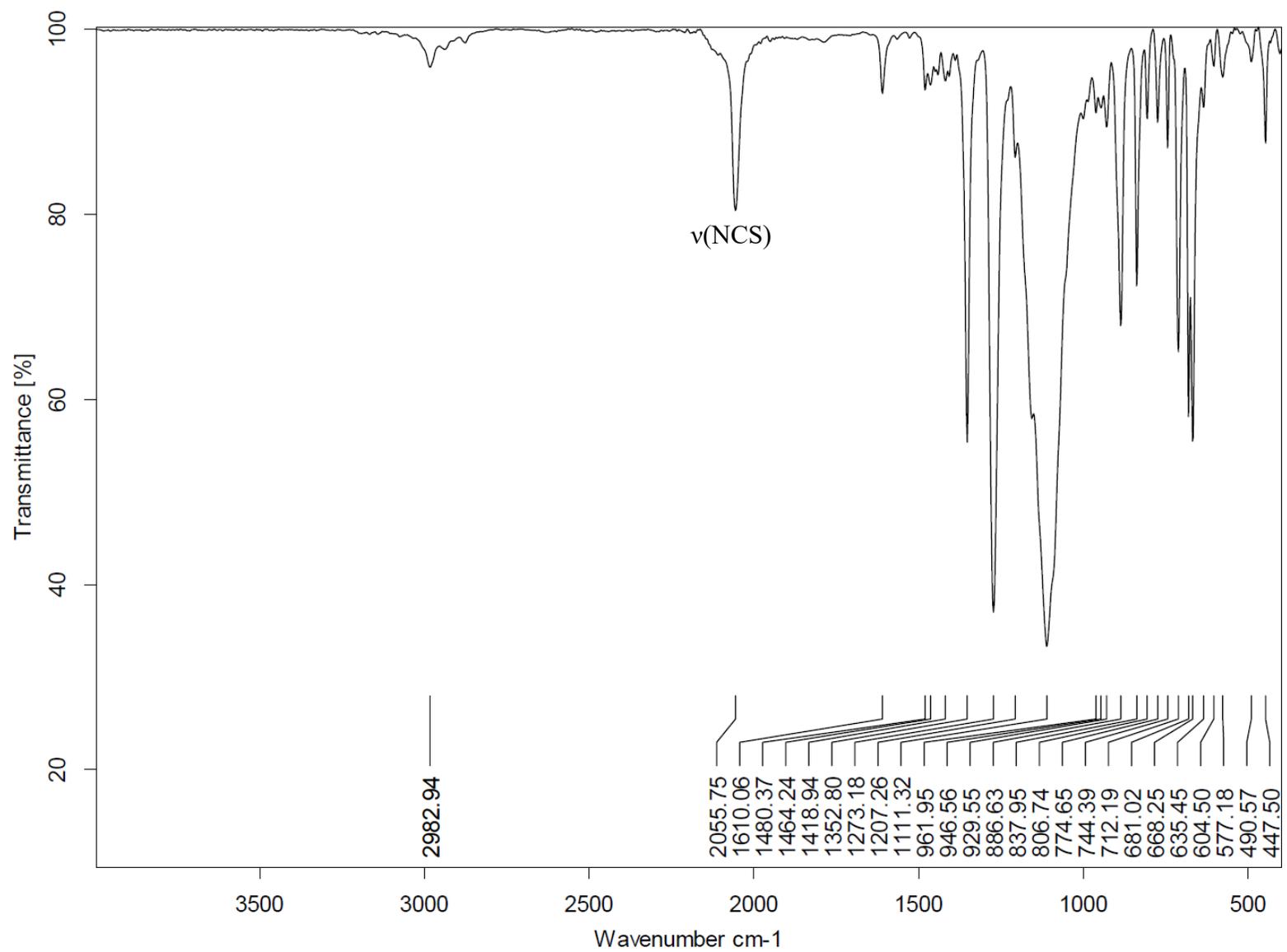
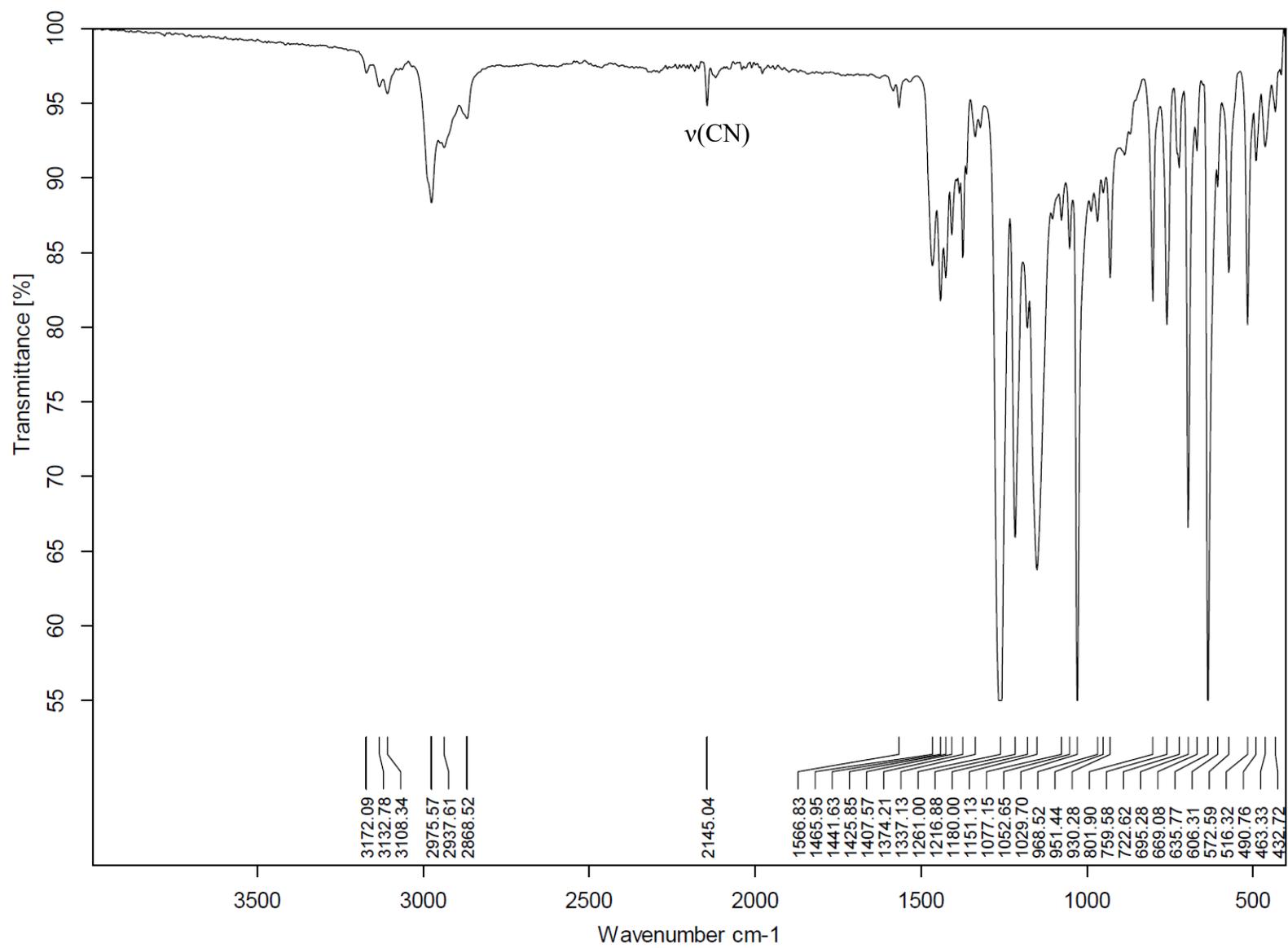


Figure S48. Solid-state IR spectrum of  $4^{\text{NCS}}$ .



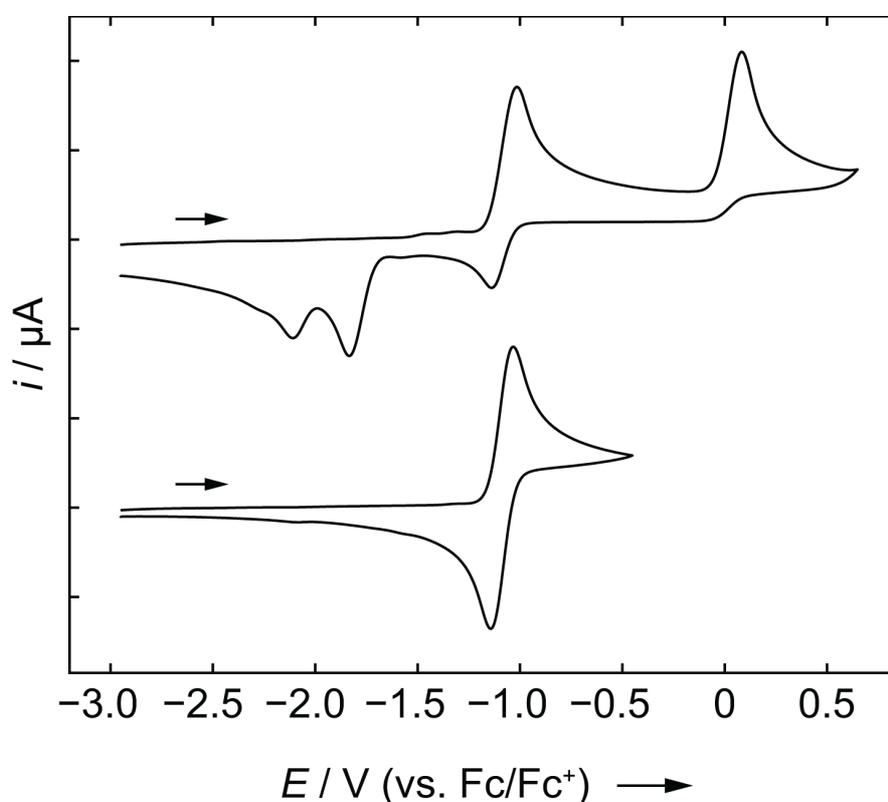
**Figure S49.** Solid-state IR spectrum of [(Z)-2<sup>NCS+</sup>][OTf<sup>-</sup>].



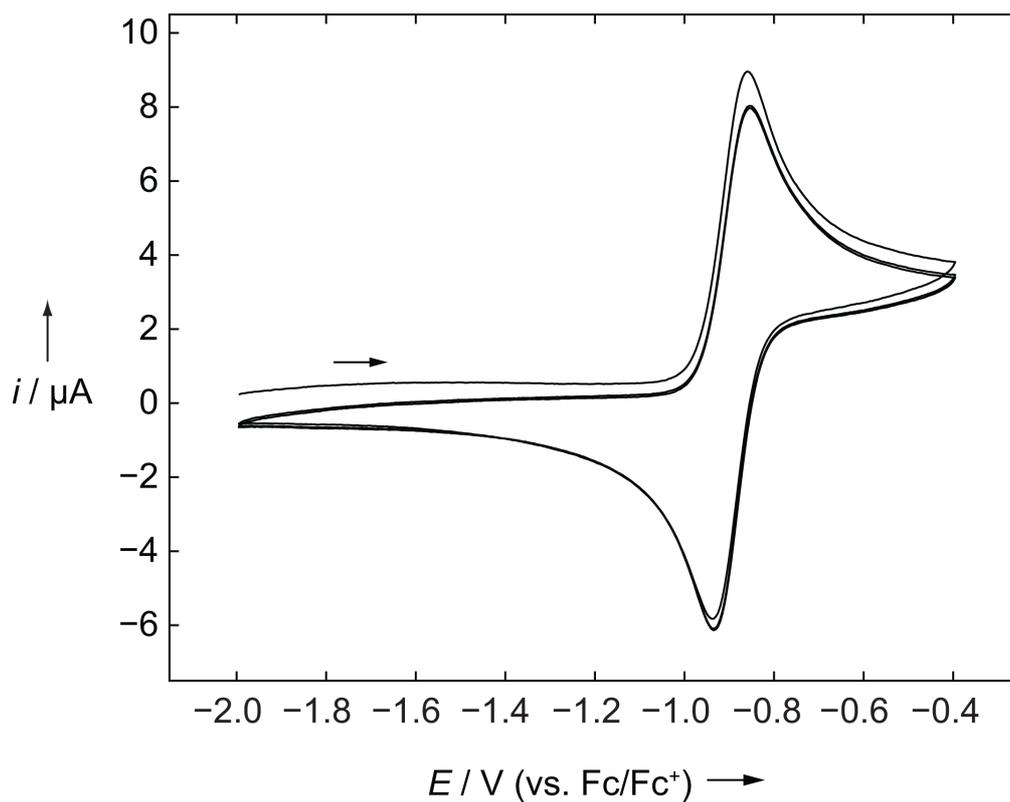
**Figure S50.** Solid-state IR spectrum of  $[(Z)-2^{CN+}][OTf^-]$ .

## Cyclic voltammetry

Cyclic voltammetry experiments were performed using a Gamry Instruments Reference 600 potentiostat. A standard three-electrode cell configuration was employed using a platinum disk working electrode, a platinum wire counter electrode, and a silver wire, separated by a *Vycor* tip, serving as the reference electrode. Formal redox potentials are referenced to the ferrocene/ferrocenium ( $[\text{Cp}_2\text{Fe}]^{+/0}$ ) redox couple by using decamethylferrocene ( $[\text{Cp}^*\text{Fe}]$ ;  $E_{1/2} = -0.427$  V in THF) as an internal standard. Tetra-*n*-butylammonium hexafluorophosphate ( $[\text{n-Bu}_4\text{N}][\text{PF}_6]$ ) was employed as the supporting electrolyte. Compensation for resistive losses ( $iR$  drop) was employed for all measurements.



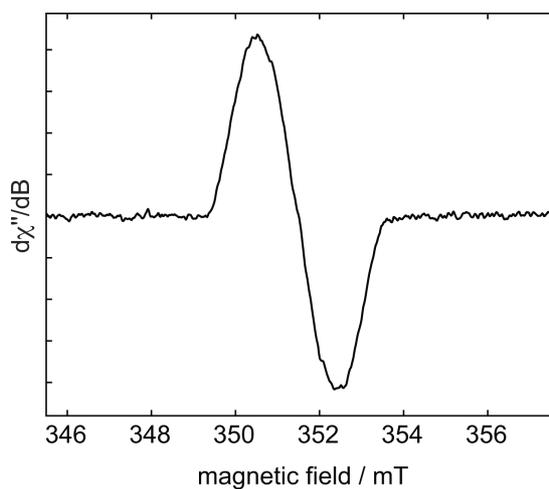
**Figure S51.** Cyclic voltammograms of **(Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup>** in THF with  $[\text{n-Bu}_4\text{N}][\text{PF}_6]$  (0.1 M) as supporting electrolyte (scan rate,  $\nu = 250$   $\text{mV s}^{-1}$ , 20 °C). The voltammogram at the bottom shows the reversibility of the first oxidation wave. Formal potentials:  $E_{1/2} = -1.06$  V,  $E_{\text{pa}} = \text{ca.} +0.08$  V (corresponding reduction peaks at  $-1.83$  V and  $-2.10$  V; relative to the  $[\text{Cp}_2\text{Fe}]^{+/0}$  couple).



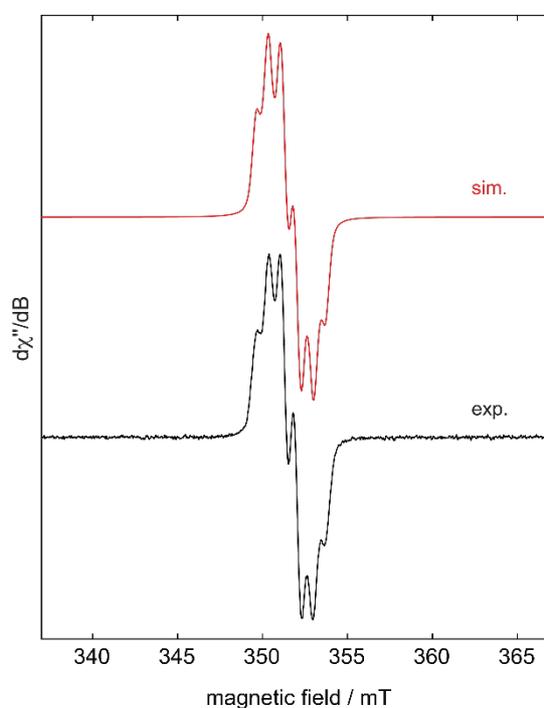
**Figure S52.** Cyclic voltammogram of **(Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>** in THF with  $[n\text{-Bu}_4\text{N}][\text{PF}_6]$  (0.1 M) as supporting electrolyte (scan rate,  $\nu = 250 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ , 20 °C). Formal potential:  $E_{1/2} = -0.89 \text{ V}$  relative to the  $[\text{Cp}_2\text{Fe}]^{+/0}$  couple.

## EPR spectra

EPR measurements at X-band (9.85 GHz) were carried out at room temperature using a Bruker ELEXSYS E580 CW EPR spectrometer. CW EPR spectra were measured using 1 mW microwave power and 0.5 G field modulation at 100 kHz, with a conversion time of 20 ms. The spectral simulations were performed using MATLAB 8.6 and the EasySpin 5.2.25 toolbox.<sup>6</sup>

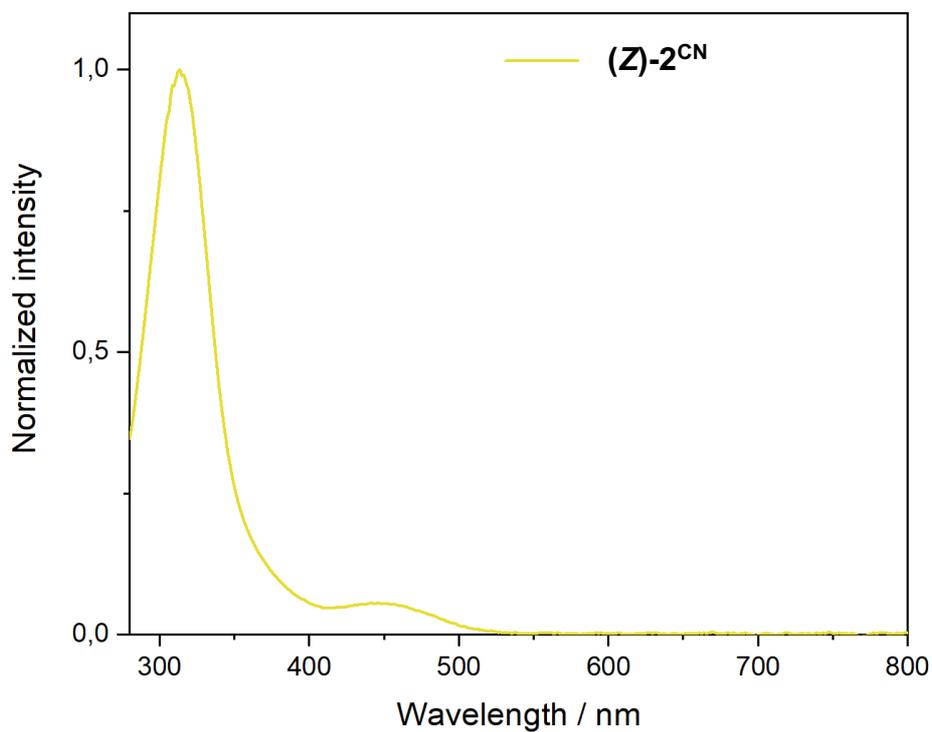


**Figure S53.** Experimental continuous-wave X-band EPR spectrum of [(Z)-2<sup>NCS<sup>+</sup></sup>][OTf] in benzene solution at room temperature. The isotropic  $g$  value is 2.003 and the peak-to-peak linewidth is 1.9 mT.

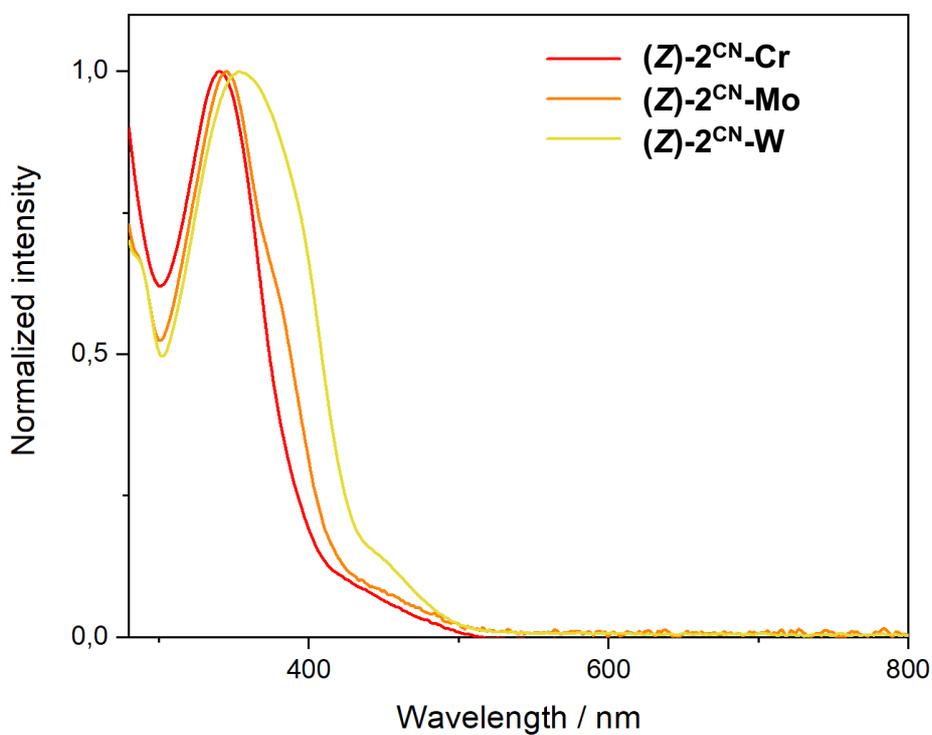


**Figure S54.** Experimental (black line) and simulated (red line) continuous-wave X-band EPR spectra of [(Z)-2<sup>CN<sup>+</sup></sup>][OTf] in benzene solution at room temperature. Best-fit simulation parameters:  $g_{\text{iso}} = 2.0025$ ,  $a(^{10,11}\text{B}) = 9.0$  MHz,  $a(^{14}\text{N}) = 21.7$  MHz, and  $a(^{14}\text{N}) = 18.0$  MHz.

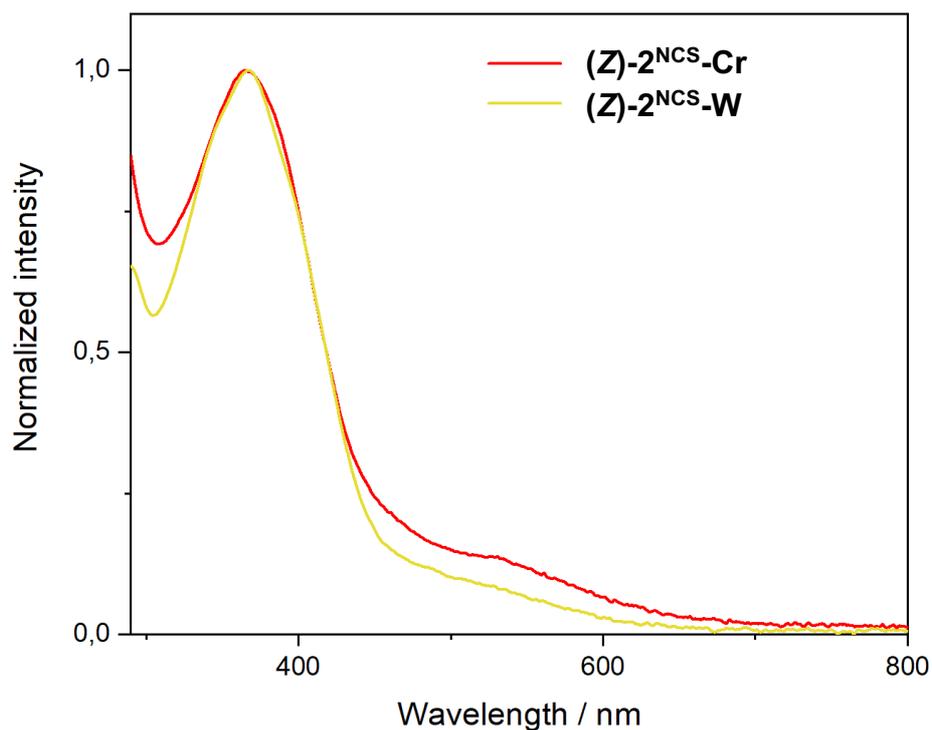
## UV-vis spectra



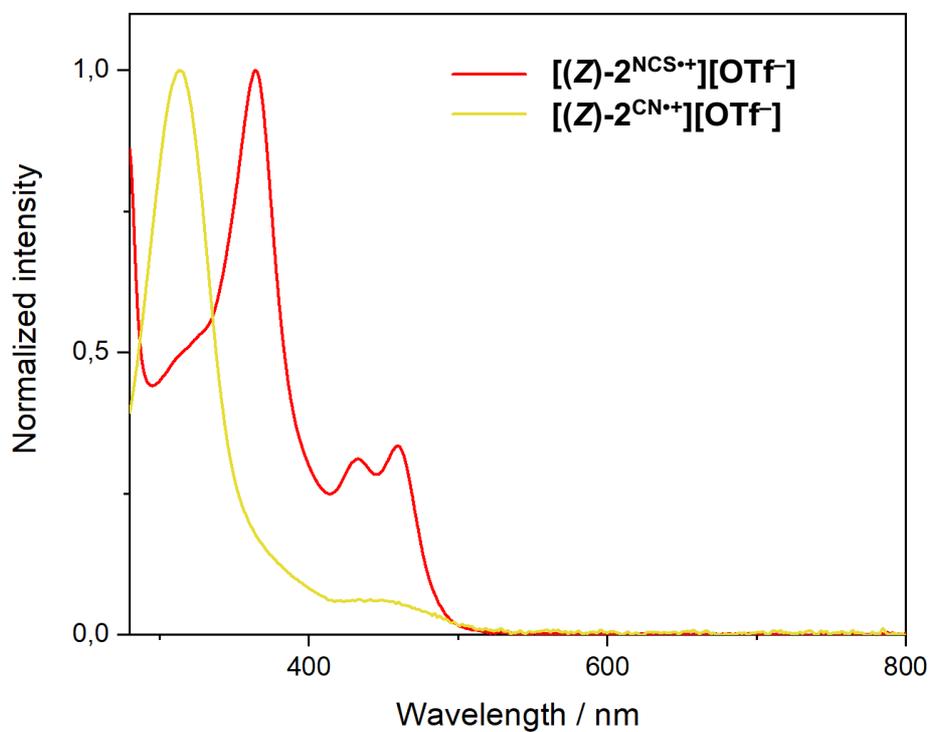
**Figure S55.** UV-vis absorption spectrum of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup> in benzene at 25 °C.



**Figure S56.** Overlay of UV-vis absorption spectra of (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-Cr (red), (Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo (orange) and (E)/(Z)-2<sup>CN</sup>-W (yellow) in benzene at 25 °C.



**Figure S57.** Overlay of UV-vis absorption spectra of  $(Z)$ - $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-Cr}$  (red) and  $(Z)$ - $2^{\text{NCS}}\text{-W}$  (yellow) in benzene at 25 °C.



**Figure S58.** Overlay of UV-vis absorption spectra of boryl radical cations  $[(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{NCS}^+}][\text{OTf}^-]$  and  $[(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}^+}][\text{OTf}^-]$  in benzene at 25 °C.

## X-ray crystallographic details

The crystal data of  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Cr}$ ,  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Mo}$ ,  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-W}$  and  $3^{\text{NCS}}$  were collected on a Bruker D8 Quest diffractometer with a CMOS area detector and multi-layer mirror monochromated  $\text{Mo}_{\text{K}\alpha}$  radiation. The crystal data of  $[(\text{Z})\text{-}2^{\text{CN}^+}][\text{OTf}^-]$  was collected on a Bruker X8-APEX II diffractometer with a CCD area detector and multi-layer mirror monochromated  $\text{Mo}_{\text{K}\alpha}$  radiation. The crystal data of  $2^{\text{CN}}$ ,  $[(\text{Z})\text{-}2^{\text{NCS}^+}][\text{OTf}^-]$  and  $[2^{\text{CN}}\text{-H}^+][\text{SPh}^-]$  were collected on a XtaLAB Synergy, Dualflex diffractometer with a HyPix area detector and multi-layer mirror monochromated  $\text{Cu}_{\text{K}\alpha}$  radiation. The structures were solved using the intrinsic phasing method,<sup>7</sup> refined with the ShelXL program<sup>8</sup> and expanded using Fourier techniques. All non-hydrogen atoms were refined anisotropically. Hydrogen atoms were included in structure factor calculations. All hydrogen atoms were assigned to idealised geometric positions, with the exception of those bound to boron, which were detected in the difference Fourier map and freely refined.

Crystallographic data have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre as supplementary publication no. 2071470–2071477. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif)

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**Refinement details for  $2^{\text{CN}}$ :** The asymmetric unit contains two half benzene molecules positioned on inversion centers and two molecules of the compound, one of which presents a twofold disorder in the C2 > C8 CAAC backbone (RESI 51 and 52 CAAC) modelled with FVAR in a 95:5 ratio, with SIMU 0.01 and SAME restraints.

**Crystal data for  $2^{\text{CN}}$ :**  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{47}\text{BN}_4\cdot(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_{0.5}$ ,  $M_r = 513.58$ , yellow plate,  $0.110\times 0.094\times 0.047\text{ mm}^3$ , monoclinic space group  $P2_1/c$ ,  $a = 32.7131(2)\text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 9.67986(7)\text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 21.35114(15)\text{ \AA}$ ,  $\beta = 108.9322(8)^\circ$ ,  $V = 6395.27(8)\text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $Z = 8$ ,  $\rho_{\text{calcd}} = 1.067\text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu = 0.467\text{ mm}^{-1}$ ,  $F(000) = 2248$ ,  $T = 100(2)\text{ K}$ ,  $R_1 = 0.0503$ ,  $wR^2 = 0.1128$ , 13395 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 72.13^\circ$ ] and 807 parameters.

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**Crystal data for  $2^{\text{CN}}\text{-Cr}$ :**  $\text{C}_{35}\text{H}_{47}\text{BCrN}_4\text{O}_5$ ,  $M_r = 666.57$ , yellow block,  $0.518\times 0.404\times 0.386\text{ mm}^3$ , monoclinic space group  $P2_1/c$ ,  $a = 19.185(7)\text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 11.123(4)\text{ \AA}$ ,

$c = 19.623(6) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $\beta = 118.54(2)^\circ$ ,  $V = 3679(2) \text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $Z = 4$ ,  $\rho_{\text{calcd}} = 1.204 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu = 0.354 \text{ mm}^{-1}$ ,  $F(000) = 1416$ ,  $T = 100(2) \text{ K}$ ,  $R_I = 0.0528$ ,  $wR^2 = 0.1044$ , 7245 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 52.044^\circ$ ] and 427 parameters.

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**Crystal data for 2<sup>CN</sup>-Mo:**  $\text{C}_{35}\text{H}_{47}\text{BMoN}_4\text{O}_5\cdot\text{C}_6\text{H}_6$ ,  $M_r = 788.62$ , yellow block,  $0.322 \times 0.204 \times 0.136 \text{ mm}^3$ , orthorhombic space group  $P2_12_12_1$ ,  $a = 13.190(6) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 14.868(5) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 21.174(7) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $V = 4152(3) \text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $Z = 4$ ,  $\rho_{\text{calcd}} = 1.261 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu = 0.361 \text{ mm}^{-1}$ ,  $F(000) = 1656$ ,  $T = 100(2) \text{ K}$ ,  $R_I = 0.0463$ ,  $wR^2 = 0.0746$ , 8028 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 52.044^\circ$ ] and 481 parameters.

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**Crystal data for 2<sup>CN</sup>-W:**  $\text{C}_{35}\text{H}_{47}\text{BN}_4\text{O}_5\text{W}$ ,  $M_r = 798.42$ , yellow block,  $0.317 \times 0.233 \times 0.226 \text{ mm}^3$ , triclinic space group  $P\bar{1}$ ,  $a = 9.653(4) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 10.588(7) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 19.881(9) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $\alpha = 78.11(2)^\circ$ ,  $\beta = 83.576(15)^\circ$ ,  $\gamma = 67.077(16)^\circ$ ,  $V = 1830.2(17) \text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $Z = 2$ ,  $\rho_{\text{calcd}} = 1.449 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu = 3.200 \text{ mm}^{-1}$ ,  $F(000) = 808$ ,  $T = 100(2) \text{ K}$ ,  $R_I = 0.0411$ ,  $wR^2 = 0.0786$ , 7190 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 52.044^\circ$ ] and 427 parameters.

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**Crystal data for [2<sup>NCS<sup>+</sup></sup>][OTf]:**  $[\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{47}\text{BN}_4\text{S}][\text{CF}_3\text{O}_3\text{S}]$ ,  $M_r = 655.66$ , red block,  $0.246 \times 0.205 \times 0.142 \text{ mm}^3$ , orthorhombic space group  $Pbc_a$ ,  $a = 12.31193(8) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 15.53996(11) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 36.3830(2) \text{ \AA}$ ,  $V = 1611.98(7) \text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $Z = 8$ ,  $\rho_{\text{calcd}} = 1.251 \text{ g}\cdot\text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu = 1.827 \text{ mm}^{-1}$ ,  $F(000) = 2792$ ,  $T = 100(2) \text{ K}$ ,  $R_I = 0.0464$ ,  $wR^2 = 0.1188$ , 6847 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 72.118^\circ$ ] and 409 parameters.

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**Refinement details for [(Z)-2<sup>CN<sup>+</sup></sup>][OTf]:** The structure was refined as a two-component twin. A number of reflections affected by the beamstop were omitted. The structure provides proof of connectivity, however the quality of the data is insufficient for structural discussions. The asymmetric unit contains a twofold disordered triflate counteranion refined to a 66:34 ratio (RESI 3 and RESI 31), the ADPs of which were restrained to the same value with similarity restraint SIMU 0.01. The half benzene solvent molecule, positioned on an inversion center, was also modelled as twofold disordered (RESI 2 and 21), refined to a 50:50 ratio and ADPs restrained using SIMU 0.01.

**Crystal data for [(Z)-2<sup>CN+</sup>][OTf]:** [C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>S][CF<sub>3</sub>O<sub>3</sub>S]·(C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>)<sub>0.5</sub>, *M<sub>r</sub>* = 663.92, yellow block, 0.541×0.493×0.334 mm<sup>3</sup>, triclinic space group *P* $\bar{1}$ , *a* = 9.430(7) Å, *b* = 9.763(7) Å, *c* = 20.736(15) Å,  $\alpha$  = 95.574(13)°,  $\beta$  = 96.19(3)°,  $\gamma$  = 101.684(14)°, *V* = 1845(2) Å<sup>3</sup>, *Z* = 2,  $\rho_{calcd}$  = 1.195 g·cm<sup>-3</sup>,  $\mu$  = 0.140 mm<sup>-1</sup>, *F*(000) = 709, *T* = 99(2) K, *R<sub>I</sub>* = 0.1103, *wR*<sup>2</sup> = 0.2519, 7248 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 52.04^\circ$ ] and 559 parameters.

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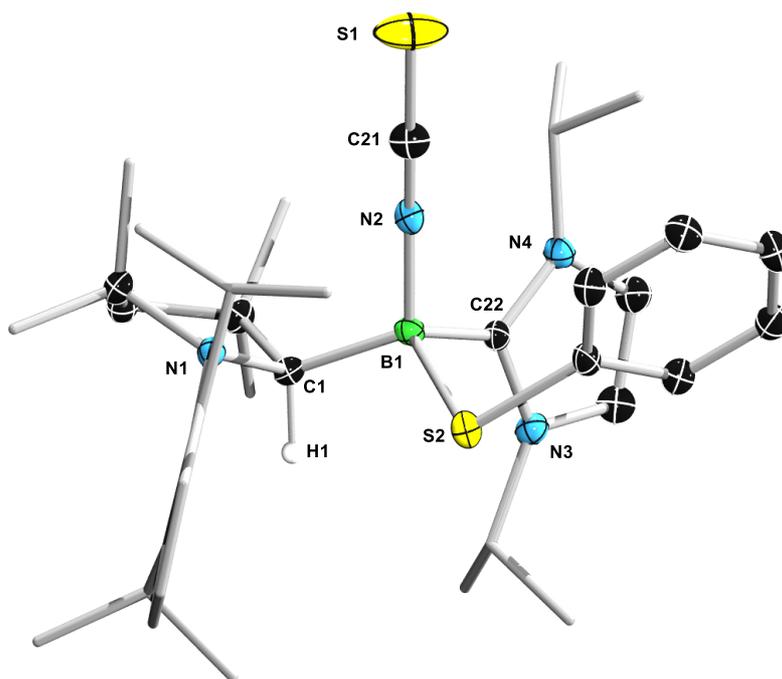
**Refinement details for [2<sup>CN</sup>-H<sup>+</sup>][PhS<sup>-</sup>]:** The asymmetric unit contains half a toluene molecule positioned on an inversion center, the benzene ring of which was modelled using AFIX 66. The PhS<sup>-</sup> anion was modelled as twofold disordered, with parts refined to a 55:45 ratio. The benzene rings of both parts were idealised with AFIX 66 and ADPs restrained with SIMU 0.01. The ADPs of C2\_15 were additionally restrained with ISOR 0.001.

**Crystal data for [2<sup>CN</sup>-H<sup>+</sup>][PhS<sup>-</sup>]:** [C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>47</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>S][C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>S]·(C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sub>0.5</sub>, *M<sub>r</sub>* = 630.76, yellow block, 0.329×0.111×0.087 mm<sup>3</sup>, triclinic space group *P* $\bar{1}$ , *a* = 9.78460(10) Å, *b* = 11.33740(10) Å, *c* = 17.2083(2) Å,  $\alpha$  = 95.3960(10)°,  $\beta$  = 95.5070(10)°,  $\gamma$  = 99.3500(10)°, *V* = 1863.18(3) Å<sup>3</sup>, *Z* = 2,  $\rho_{calcd}$  = 1.124 g·cm<sup>-3</sup>,  $\mu$  = 0.997 mm<sup>-1</sup>, *F*(000) = 686, *T* = 99.8(8) K, *R<sub>I</sub>* = 0.0572, *wR*<sup>2</sup> = 0.1551, 7909 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 156.014^\circ$ ] and 487 parameters.

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**Refinement details for 3<sup>NCS</sup>:** The asymmetric unit contains one benzene molecule, which was modelled as twofold disordered in a 56:44 ratio. The benzene rings were idealised with AFIX 66. ADPs were restrained with SIMU 0.005.

**Crystal data for 3<sup>NCS</sup>:** C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>53</sub>BN<sub>4</sub>S<sub>2</sub>·C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, *M<sub>r</sub>* = 694.86, colourless block, 0.308×0.21×0.191 mm<sup>3</sup>, monoclinic space group *Pc*, *a* = 10.657(7) Å, *b* = 16.337(11) Å, *c* = 11.950(9) Å,  $\beta$  = 106.86(2)°, *V* = 1991(2) Å<sup>3</sup>, *Z* = 2,  $\rho_{calcd}$  = 1.159 g·cm<sup>-3</sup>,  $\mu$  = 0.168 mm<sup>-1</sup>, *F*(000) = 752, *T* = 100(2) K, *R<sub>I</sub>* = 0.0369, *wR*<sup>2</sup> = 0.0740, 7672 independent reflections [ $2\theta \leq 52.04^\circ$ ] and 485 parameters.



**Figure S58.** Crystallographically-derived solid-state structure of  $3^{\text{NCS}}$ . Atomic displacement ellipsoids drawn at 50% probability. Ellipsoids on ligand periphery and hydrogen atoms (except H bound to CAAC) omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths ( $\text{\AA}$ ): N1–C1 1.507(3), C1–B1 1.643(4), B1–C22 1.661(4), B1–N2 1.515(3), N2–C21 1.156(3), C21–S1 1.603(3), B1–S2 1.968(3).

## Computational details

Geometry optimisations and Hessian calculations were performed for  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}}$ ,  $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{NCS}}$ ,  $[(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}^+}]$ , and  $[(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{NCS}^+}]$  at the OLYP<sup>9</sup>/TZ2P level of theory. All optimised structures were characterised as minimum energy geometries as only positive eigenvalues were obtained in the vibrational frequency calculations. Atomic charges were obtained using the Hirshfeld analysis.<sup>10</sup> Spin densities were obtained from the multipole derived charges up to quadrupole expansion (MDC-q).<sup>11</sup> All calculations were performed with ADF 2019.<sup>12</sup>

## Cartesian coordinates

### $(Z)\text{-}2^{\text{CN}}$

```
C 19.371008000 3.731360000 4.840826000
N 20.481692000 4.155358000 4.074913000
C 21.533165000 3.098582000 3.885510000
C 21.221120000 2.175862000 5.069457000
H 21.799481000 2.510405000 5.936379000
H 21.508627000 1.138853000 4.873284000
C 19.715612000 2.316288000 5.383385000
C 21.433426000 2.330176000 2.542648000
H 22.105894000 1.466035000 2.572467000
H 21.746850000 2.952183000 1.705648000
H 20.429579000 1.960291000 2.337449000
C 22.971066000 3.635341000 3.975305000
H 23.670439000 2.807644000 3.818528000
H 23.184726000 4.065508000 4.951879000
H 23.174339000 4.387313000 3.208894000
C 19.531757000 2.162275000 6.907379000
H 19.962684000 1.209285000 7.240809000
H 18.479613000 2.154687000 7.194579000
H 20.035257000 2.965017000 7.451794000
C 18.892686000 1.191770000 4.709570000
H 19.294115000 0.207600000 4.981958000
H 18.889557000 1.262957000 3.621361000
```

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C 20.641836000 5.489600000 3.544180000  
C 21.226914000 6.504974000 4.359145000  
C 21.449931000 7.771514000 3.807989000  
H 21.897532000 8.548493000 4.421032000  
C 21.106320000 8.068752000 2.497358000  
H 21.291940000 9.060996000 2.090808000  
C 20.501770000 7.093556000 1.719801000  
H 20.205316000 7.342626000 0.705052000  
C 20.245559000 5.807736000 2.212792000  
C 19.508548000 4.844078000 1.280651000  
H 19.420277000 3.892061000 1.802081000  
C 18.072063000 5.316738000 0.971983000  
H 17.547562000 4.552645000 0.384779000  
H 18.068068000 6.240328000 0.383947000  
H 17.507678000 5.506480000 1.883843000  
C 20.260896000 4.598421000 -0.044564000  
H 19.793767000 3.776670000 -0.600003000  
H 21.312470000 4.344690000 0.109568000  
H 20.232973000 5.481626000 -0.690790000  
C 21.598092000 6.311318000 5.831555000  
H 21.430299000 5.261117000 6.074403000  
C 20.685239000 7.141721000 6.758396000  
H 20.884937000 6.891229000 7.807708000  
H 19.632728000 6.958499000 6.546673000  
H 20.864176000 8.215387000 6.638202000  
C 23.073816000 6.640978000 6.141690000  
H 23.317846000 6.341430000 7.167940000  
H 23.272684000 7.714645000 6.065079000  
H 23.768293000 6.133257000 5.468902000  
B 18.114522000 4.480365000 5.100906000  
C 17.745318000 5.903952000 4.642704000  
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C 16.832368000 3.959800000 5.917234000

N 16.495239000 4.233231000 7.216447000  
C 15.222273000 3.784370000 7.494570000  
H 14.758288000 3.890487000 8.462015000  
C 14.740266000 3.222298000 6.356036000  
H 13.785395000 2.759273000 6.165686000  
N 15.726242000 3.337273000 5.399448000  
C 17.325109000 5.028973000 8.153777000  
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C 17.509529000 4.317473000 9.497393000  
H 18.234347000 4.876851000 10.096506000  
H 17.890038000 3.301589000 9.372485000  
H 16.580091000 4.271830000 10.074561000  
C 16.750967000 6.442352000 8.309901000  
H 17.429807000 7.041594000 8.924193000  
H 15.775099000 6.428604000 8.807187000  
H 16.646383000 6.933898000 7.341074000  
C 15.541666000 3.001777000 3.965626000  
H 16.549194000 3.100405000 3.551960000  
C 15.045418000 1.565882000 3.774493000  
H 15.070109000 1.322394000 2.708009000  
H 14.011819000 1.435205000 4.111686000  
H 15.673364000 0.841521000 4.297537000  
C 14.628676000 4.031583000 3.288618000  
H 14.591147000 3.829403000 2.213847000  
H 15.005631000 5.045817000 3.430481000  
H 13.605050000 3.978758000 3.674670000

**(Z)-2<sup>NCS</sup>**

C 2.424022000 -0.272470000 14.954256000  
C 1.964174000 -0.734665000 17.309141000  
C 1.127888000 0.382982000 17.988592000  
C 1.846543000 -1.979728000 18.203014000  
C 3.428454000 -0.301332000 17.163080000  
C 3.580216000 0.361186000 15.774971000

C 3.491857000 1.903723000 15.876178000  
C 4.990315000 0.028642000 15.241512000  
C 0.595292000 -1.945808000 15.498537000  
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**[(Z)-2<sup>CN+</sup>]**

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**[(Z)-2<sup>NCS+</sup>]**

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