## **Supporting Information**

Preparation and characterization of a highly dispersed and stable Ni catalyst with microporous nanosilica as support

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Fig. S1. SEM image of SiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles prepared by a modified Stöber method.



**Fig. S2.** Profiles of m/z = 18 (A), and 44 (B) measured by mass spectrometer during thermal decomposition of different nanosilicas in O<sub>2</sub>/He mixture.



Fig. S3.  $H_2$ -TPR profiles of different catalysts: (a) 5.0 wt% Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D1; (b) 2.0 wt% Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D1; (c) 1.5 wt% Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D1.



**Fig. S4.** Ni particle size distributions for Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D1 catalyst before (a) and after 200 h (a') reaction, Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D2 catalyst before (b) and after 60 h (b') reaction, Ni/SiO<sub>2</sub>-C catalyst before (c) and after 30 h (c') reaction, and Ni-EDTA/SiO<sub>2</sub>-D1 catalyst before (d) and after 60 h (d') reaction. Reaction conditions: T=750 °C,  $CH_4/O_2/Ar=2:1:4$ , GHSV=1.0×10<sup>5</sup> mL g<sup>-1</sup> h<sup>-1</sup>.



Fig. S5. TG profiles of different catalysts after the POM reaction.

$$Si(OEt)_{4} + (4-\beta)H_{2}O \xrightarrow{OH^{-}} Si(OH)_{4-\beta}(OEt)_{\beta} + (4-\beta)EtOH (1)$$
  

$$Si(OH)_{4-\beta}(OEt)_{\beta} \rightarrow SiO_{2x}(OH)_{\alpha}(OEt)_{\beta} + 2xH_{2}O (2)$$
  

$$SiO_{2x}(OH)_{\alpha}(OEt)_{\beta} \rightarrow SiO_{2} + (\alpha/2)H_{2}O + (\beta/2)Et_{2}O (3)$$

Equations for the Stöber reaction