

Supporting Information

**Cu-catalysed oxidative C–H/C–H coupling polymerisation of
benzodiimidazoles: an efficient approach to regioregular
polybenzodiimidazoles for blue-emitting materials**

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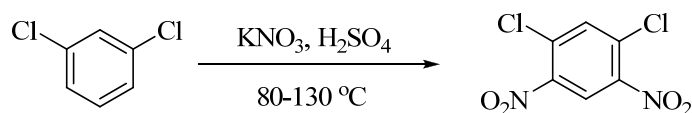
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I. General remarks

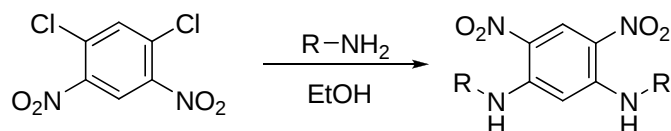
Unless otherwise noted, all reagents were obtained from commercial suppliers and used without further purification. Cu(OAc)₂ was washed with acetic anhydride using a Soxhlet extractor for 5 days prior to use. Benzodiiimidazole derivatives were synthesized according to the literature procedures.¹ NMR spectra were obtained on a Bruker AMX-400. The ¹H NMR (400 MHz) chemical shifts were reported relative to CDCl₃ as the internal reference (CDCl₃: δ = 7.26 ppm); The ¹³C NMR (100 MHz) chemical shifts were given using CDCl₃ as the internal standard (CDCl₃: δ = 77.16 ppm). High-resolution mass spectra (HR-MS) were obtained with a Waters-Q-TOF-Premier (ESI). Melting points were determined with XRC-1 and are uncorrected. Gel permeation chromatography (GPC) measurements were performed on a LC-20AD system using CHCl₃ as eluent and polystyrene as standards at a column temperature of 40 °C. Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) was carried out using NETZSCH TG 209F1 Iris at a heating rate of 10 °C/min under N₂ atmosphere. Absorption spectra were recorded on HITACHI U-2910 spectrophotometer. Fluorescence spectra and absolute quantum yields were collected on a Horiba Jobin Yvon-Edison Fluoromax-4 fluorescence spectrometer with a calibrated integrating sphere system. To reduce the fluctuation in the excitation intensity, the lamp was kept on for 1 hour prior to the experiment.

II. Synthesis of the benzodiiimidazole derivatives

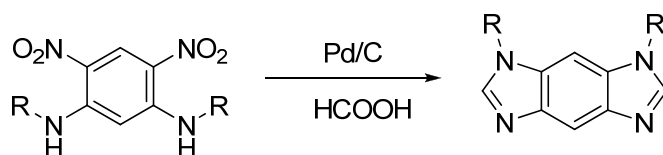


To a well-stirred mixture of 7.31 g (50 mmol) of *m*-dichlorobenzene with 25 g (247.5 mmol) of potassium nitrate was added 80 mL of concentrated sulfuric acid in one portion. The temperature of the reaction mixture rose during a few minutes to 80 °C and kept the temperature for 30 minutes. And then rose the temperature to 130 °C for 4 h. After the reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature, it was poured into

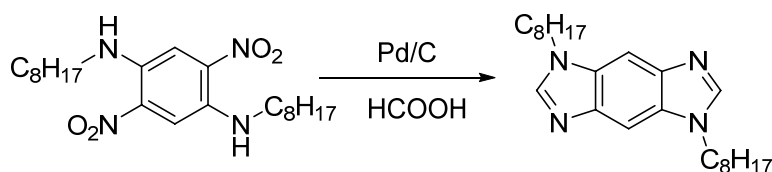
crushed ice. A yellow precipitated was collected and washed by water (3×100 mL). The resulting solid was recrystallized with ethyl alcohol, affording 1,5-dichloro-3,4-dinitrobenzene as a yellow solid (10.82 g, 91.1% yield).



After 1,5-dichloro-3,4-dinitrobenzene (1.00 g, 4.22 mmol) was dissolved in EtOH (75 mL), amine (16.9 mmol) was added in a single portion. The mixture was then placed in an oil bath at 80 °C and stirred for 48 h. The mixture was poured into H₂O (200 mL) which caused solids to precipitate. The solids (*N*¹,*N*³-dialkyl-4,6-dinitrobenzene-1,3-diamine) were collected via vacuum filtration, rinsed with H₂O, and dried under vacuum.



*N*¹,*N*³-Dialkyl-4,6-dinitrobenzene-1,3-diamine (2.44 mmol) was suspended in HCO₂H (88%, 100 mL). To the suspension was added HCO₂Na (1.99 g, 29.2 mmol) and Pd/C (103 mg, 3 wt %, 0.05 mmol Pd). The mixture was heated in an oil bath at 140 °C for 48 h. Upon completion, the cooled reaction mixture was filtered through celite and the filtrate volume was reduced to ca. 20 mL under vacuum. The solution was then added slowly into a vigorously stirred saturated solution of aqueous Na₂CO₃ (150 mL). Precipitated solids were collected via vacuum filtration, rinsed with H₂O. Purification via silica gel column chromatography (petroleum ether/acetone = 1/1, v/v) afforded the desired product.



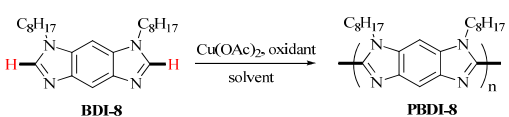
*N*¹,*N*⁴-Dioctyl-3,6-dinitrobenzene-1,4-diamine² (2.23 g, 5.29 mmol) was suspended

in HCO₂H (88%, 80 mL). To the suspension was added HCO₂Na (8.0 g, 118 mmol) and Pd/C (1.8 g, 5 wt %). The mixture was heated in an oil bath at 140 °C for 40 h. Upon completion, the cooled reaction mixture was filtered through celite and the filtrate volume was reduced to ca. 20 mL under vacuum. The solution was then added slowly into a vigorously stirred saturated solution of aqueous Na₂CO₃ (150 mL). Precipitated solids were collected via vacuum filtration, rinsed with H₂O. Purification via silica gel column chromatography (petroleum ether/acetone = 1/1, v/v) afforded the desired product (800 mg, 39.5%).

III. Optimization of the oxidative C–H/C–H coupling polymerization

1,7-Dioctyl-1*H*,7*H*-benzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (**BDI-8**, 0.25 mmol), Cu(OAc)₂ (9 mg, 20 mol%) and oxidant were dissolved in solvent (1 mL). The reaction container was purged with O₂ for 30 min to remove air and then heated at 140 °C for 24 h. The mixture was cooled to room temperature, and the polymer was precipitated by slowly adding the mixture of CH₃OH and H₂O. The resulting solid was filtered and subjected to Soxhlet extraction in methanol, acetone and hexane for the removal of low molecular weight materials and impurities. The remaining polymer was extracted with chloroform, precipitated again from methanol, filtered, washed with methanol and dried under vacuum.

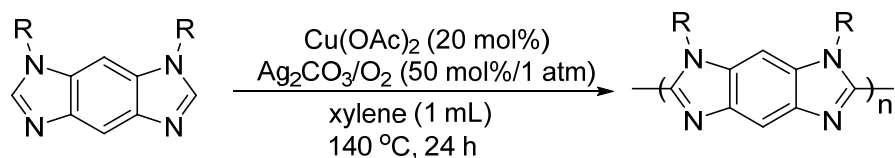
Table S1 Optimization of the Cu-catalysed oxidative C–H/C–H coupling polymerisation^a

					
Entry	Oxidant ^b	Solvent	Yield ^c	M _n ^d	PDI ^d
1	Ag ₂ CO ₃ (1.5)/O ₂	xylene	63%	8100	1.78
2	Ag ₂ CO ₃ (1.0)/O ₂	xylene	70%	3300	3.08
3	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	xylene	66%	32000	1.52
4	Ag ₂ CO ₃ (0.2)/O ₂	xylene	67%	8200	3.55
5 ^e	–	xylene	70%	2700	2.63
6 ^e	–	DMF	64%	2200	2.21
7 ^f	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	xylene	71%	6700	2.32
8	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	dioxane	67%	5800	2.47
9	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	dioxane/DMF	67%	4700	3.27
10	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	toluene	74%	5300	3.46

11	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	toluene/CHCl ₃	63%	4200	1.93
12 ^g	Ag ₂ CO ₃ /O ₂	xylene	68%	31500	2.16

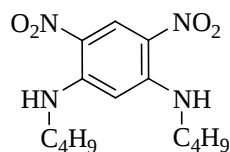
^a Reaction conditions: **BDI-8** (0.25 mmol), Cu(OAc)₂ (20 mol%), Ag₂CO₃ (0.5 equiv), and solvent (1.0 mL) under O₂ (1 atm) at 140 °C for 24 h; ^b The number in parentheses is the equivalent of Ag₂CO₃; ^c The products were obtained by reprecipitation from CHCl₃/MeOH after Soxhlet extraction; ^d Estimated by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) on polystyrene standards; ^e Cu(OAc)₂ (1.0 equiv); ^f Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O; ^g 48 h.

IV. General procedure for the oxidative C–H/C–H coupling polymerization of benzodiimidazoles



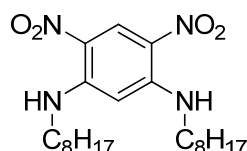
The benzodiimidazole derivative (0.25 mmol), Cu(OAc)₂ (9 mg, 20 mol%) and Ag₂CO₃ (34.5 mg, 50 mol%) were dissolved in xylene (1 mL). The reaction container was purged with O₂ for 30 min to remove air and then heated at 140 °C for 24 h. The mixture was cooled to room temperature, and the polymer was precipitated by slowly adding the mixture of CH₃OH and H₂O. The resulting solid was filtered and subjected to Soxhlet extraction in methanol, acetone and hexane for the removal of low molecular weight materials and impurities. The remaining polymer was extracted with chloroform, precipitated again from methanol, filtered, washed with methanol and dried under vacuum.

V. Characterization data of products



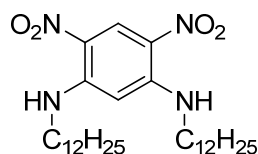
*N*¹,*N*³-Dibutyl-4,6-dinitrobenzene-1,3-diamine

A yellow powder, m.p.100-102 °C, ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 1.01 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 6H), 1.46-1.55 (m, 4H), 1.72-1.79 (m, 4H), 3.25-3.30 (m, 4H), 5.64 (s, 1H), 8.31 (s, 2H), 9.22 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 13.9, 20.4, 30.6, 43.2, 90.2, 124.2, 129.7, 148.8 ppm. HRMS (ESI^+): calculated for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_4\text{N}_4\text{Na}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$ 333.1539, found 333.1536.



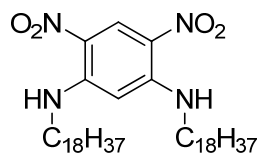
4,6-Dinitro- N^1,N^3 -diethylbenzene-1,3-diamine

A yellow powder, m.p. 76-78 °C, ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.89 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 1.29-1.49 (m, 20H), 1.72-1.80 (m, 4H), 3.24-3.29 (m, 4H), 5.63 (s, 1H), 8.31 (s, 2H), 9.22 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 14.2, 22.8, 27.2, 28.6, 29.3, 29.4, 31.9, 43.5, 90.2, 124.2, 129.7, 148.8 ppm. HRMS (ESI^+): calculated for $\text{C}_{22}\text{H}_{38}\text{O}_4\text{N}_4\text{Na}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$ 445.2791, found 445.2788.



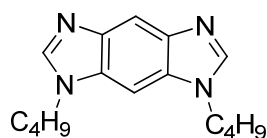
N^1,N^3 -Didodecyl-4,6-dinitrobenzene-1,3-diamine

A yellow powder, m.p. 84-86 °C, ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.88 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 1.26-1.36 (m, 32H), 1.42-1.49 (m, 4H), 1.73-1.80 (m, 4H), 3.24-3.29 (m, 4H), 5.63 (s, 1H), 8.32 (s, 2H), 9.23 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 14.3, 22.8, 27.2, 28.6, 29.4, 29.5, 29.6, 29.7, 29.77, 29.79, 32.1, 43.5, 90.2, 124.2, 129.8, 148.8 ppm. HRMS (ESI^+): calculated for $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{54}\text{O}_4\text{N}_4\text{Na}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$ 557.4043, found 557.4045.



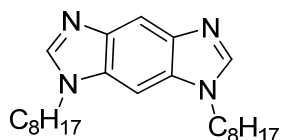
4,6-Dinitro-*N*¹,*N*³-di-octadecylbenzene-1,3-diamine

A yellow powder, m.p. 82-84 °C, ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 0.88 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 1.25-1.36 (m, 56H), 1.42-1.47 (m, 4H), 1.72-1.80 (m, 4H), 3.24-3.29 (m, 4H), 5.63 (s, 1H), 8.32 (s, 2H), 9.23 (s, 1H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 14.3, 22.8, 27.2, 28.6, 29.4, 29.5, 29.65, 29.73, 29.80, 29.81, 29.83, 29.9, 32.1, 43.5, 90.2, 124.2, 129.8, 148.8 ppm. HRMS (ESI⁺): calculated for C₄₂H₇₈O₄N₄Na [M+Na]⁺ 725.5921, found 725.5919.



1,7-Dibutyl-1*H*,7*H*-benzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (BDI-4)

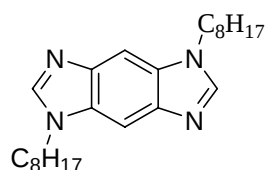
A white powder, m.p. 76-78 °C, ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 0.93-0.97 (m, 6H), 1.33-1.40 (m, 4H), 1.85-1.90 (m, 4H), 4.16-4.20 (m, 4H), 7.19 (s, 1H), 7.89 (s, 2H), 8.16 (s, 1H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 13.7, 20.2, 31.5, 45.0, 88.3, 110.3, 132.1, 141.1, 143.7 ppm. HRMS (ESI⁺): calculated for C₁₆H₂₃N₄ [M+H]⁺ 271.1923, found 271.1920.



1,7-Di-octyl-1*H*,7*H*-benzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (BDI-8)

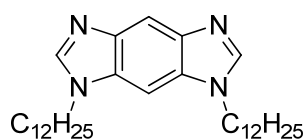
A white powder, m.p. 72-74 °C, ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 0.84 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 6H), 1.22-1.32 (m, 20H), 1.86-1.91 (m, 4H), 4.17 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 7.18 (s, 1H), 7.89 (s, 2H), 8.17 (s, 1H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 14.1, 22.7, 27.0,

29.2, 29.5, 31.8, 45.3, 88.3, 110.3, 132.0, 141.1, 143.7 ppm. HRMS (ESI⁺): calculated for C₂₄H₃₉N₄ [M+H]⁺ 383.3175, found 383.3173.



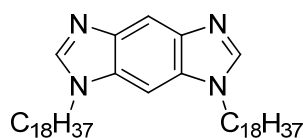
1,5-Dioctyl-1,5-dihydrobenzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (BDI-8')

A white powder, m.p. 106-108 °C, ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 0.83 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 1.22-1.30 (m, 20H), 1.87-1.92 (m, 4H), 4.19 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 7.72 (s, 2H), 7.93 (s, 2H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 14.1, 22.7, 26.9, 29.2, 29.5, 31.8, 45.4, 99.1, 131.6, 141.6, 144.2 ppm. HRMS (ESI⁺): calculated for C₂₄H₃₉N₄ [M+H]⁺ 383.3175, found 383.3173.



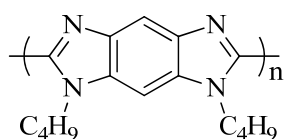
1,7-Didodecyl-1*H*,7*H*-benzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (BDI-12)

A white powder, m.p. 70-72 °C, ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 0.87 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 6H), 1.24-1.35 (m, 36H), 1.87-1.96 (m, 4H), 4.20 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 7.20 (s, 1H), 7.92 (s, 2H), 8.19 (s, 1H) ppm. ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.3, 29.5, 29.57, 29.61, 29.68, 29.73, 29.74, 32.0, 45.4, 88.3, 110.5, 132.1, 141.2, 143.8 ppm. HRMS (ESI⁺): calculated for C₃₂H₅₅N₄ [M+H]⁺ 495.4427, found 495.4426.



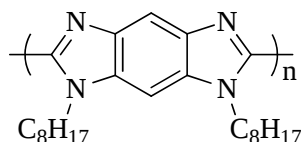
1,7-Dioctadecyl-1*H*,7*H*-benzo[1,2-*d*:4,5-*d'*]diimidazole (BDI-18)

A white powder, m.p. 68-70 °C, ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.87 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 1.24-1.34 (m, 60H), 1.90-1.94 (m, 4H), 4.20 (t, J = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 7.21 (s, 1H), 7.93 (s, 2H), 8.18 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.3, 29.5, 29.57, 29.61, 29.7, 29.76, 29.79, 29.83, 32.1, 45.4, 88.4, 110.3, 132.1, 141.1, 143.7 ppm. HRMS (ESI^+): calculated for $\text{C}_{44}\text{H}_{79}\text{N}_4$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ 663.6305, found 663.6308.



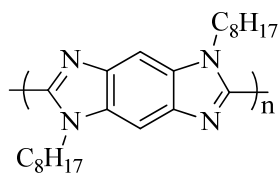
PBDI-4

According to the general procedure, **PBDI-4** was obtained as a brown solid (42 mg, 63% yield). Mn = 22500, PDI = 2.09. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.94-0.99 (m, 6H), 1.43 (s, 4H), 1.97 (s, 4H), 5.11 (s, 4H), 7.43 (s, 1H), 8.30 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 13.9, 20.3, 31.9, 45.3, 89.4, 110.2, 134.8, 140.7, 144.0.



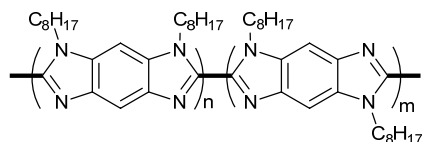
PBDI-8

According to the general procedure, **PBDI-8** was obtained as a brown solid (63 mg, 66% yield). Mn = 32000, PDI = 1.52. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.83 (s, 6H), 1.23 (s, 20H), 1.98 (s, 4H), 5.09 (s, 4H), 7.43 (s, 1H), 8.32 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.3, 29.77, 29.84, 31.9, 45.6, 89.3, 110.4, 134.8, 140.8, 144.0. The structure of **PBDI-8** was further confirmed by ^1H - ^1H NOESY spectrum and HMQC (^{13}C - ^1H COSY) spectrum.



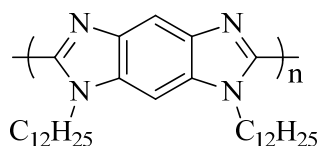
PBDI-8'

According to the general procedure, **PBDI-8'** was obtained as a brown solid (67 mg, 71% yield). $M_n = 5800$, $PDI = 1.33$. 1H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 0.85$ (s, 6H), 1.24-1.28 (m, 20H), 2.01 (s, 4H), 5.08 (s, 4H), 7.95 (s, 2H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 14.2, 22.7, 27.0, 29.3, 29.8, 31.9, 45.6, 99.7, 134.0, 141.5, 144.4$.



COPBDI-8

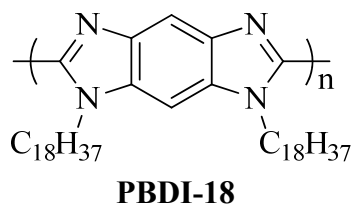
According to the general procedure, **COPBDI-8** was obtained as a brown solid (57 mg, 61% yield). $M_n = 4100$, $PDI = 1.50$. 1H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 0.82$ (s, 11H), 1.24 (m, 36H), 1.98 (m, 7.7H), 5.08 (s, 4H), 7.43 (s, 1H), 7.93 (s, 1.8H), 8.34 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.3, 29.8, 31.8, 45.5, 134.8, 140.8, 141.6, 144.5$.



PBDI-12

According to the general procedure, **PBDI-12** was obtained as a brown solid (78 mg, 63% yield). $M_n = 37200$, $PDI = 1.68$. 1H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 0.84$ -0.88 (m, 6H), 1.22-1.25 (m, 36H), 1.98 (s, 4H), 5.09 (s, 4H), 7.43 (s, 1H), 8.33 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.46, 29.51, 29.79, 29.83, 32.1$,

45.7, 89.3, 110.4, 134.8, 140.8, 144.0.



According to the general procedure, **PBDI-18** was obtained as a brown solid (140 mg, 85% yield). $M_n = 44500$, PDI = 1.32. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 0.86 (s, 6H), 1.25 (s, 60H), 1.99 (s, 4H), 5.10 (s, 4H), 7.43 (s, 1H), 8.33 (s, 1H) ppm. ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ = 14.2, 22.8, 27.1, 29.46, 29.51, 29.79, 29.84, 32.1, 45.6, 89.3, 110.3, 134.9, 140.8, 144.0.

VI. References

1. A. J. Boydston, P. D. Vu, O. L. Dykhno, V. Chang, A. R. Wyatt, A. S. Stockett, E. T. Ritschdorff, J. B. Shear and C. W. Bielawski, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2008, **130**, 3143.
2. Z.-L. Zhou, S.-T. Lam, L. Zhao, US20130237725.

VII. Absorption spectra of the polymers

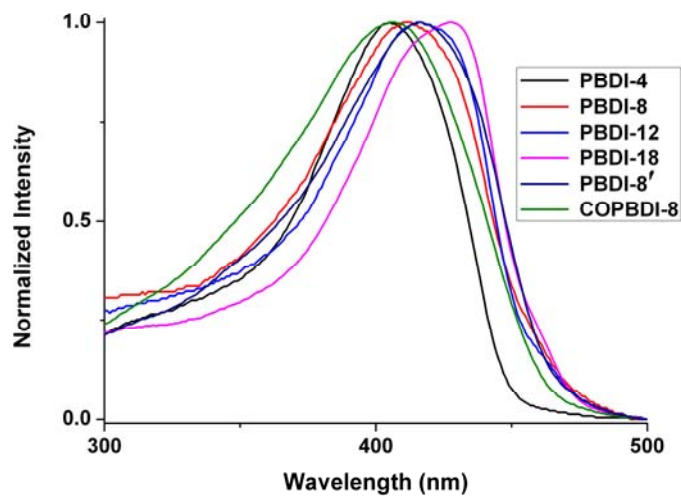


Fig. S1. Absorption spectra of **PBDI-4**, **PBDI-8**, **PBDI-12**, **PBDI-18**, **PBDI-8'** and **COPBDI-8** in CHCl_3 .

VIII. Emission spectra of the polymers in PS film

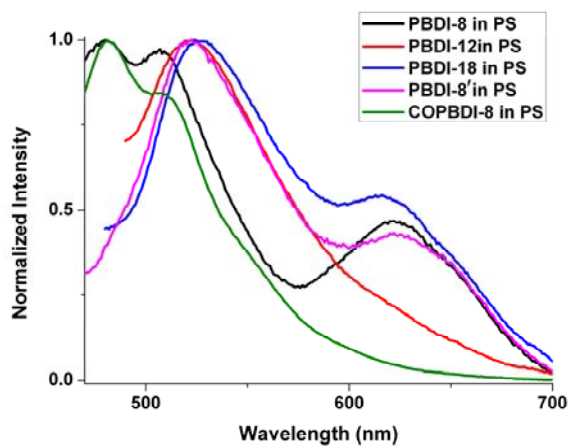


Fig. S2. Emission spectra of **PBDI-8**, **PBDI-12**, **PBDI-18**, **PBDI-8'** and **COPBDI-8** in PS ($c = 1 \text{ wt\%}$) film.

IX. TGA curves of the polymers

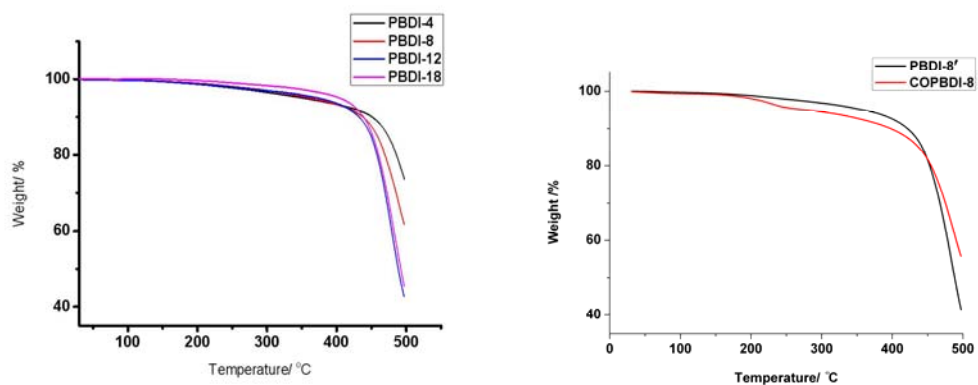


Fig. S3. TGA curves of **PBDI-4**, **PBDI-8**, **PBDI-12** and **PBDI-18** (left); TGA curves of **PBDI-8'** and **COPBDI-8** (right).

X. ^1H - ^1H NOESY and HMQC (^{13}C - ^1H COSY) spectra of PBDI-8

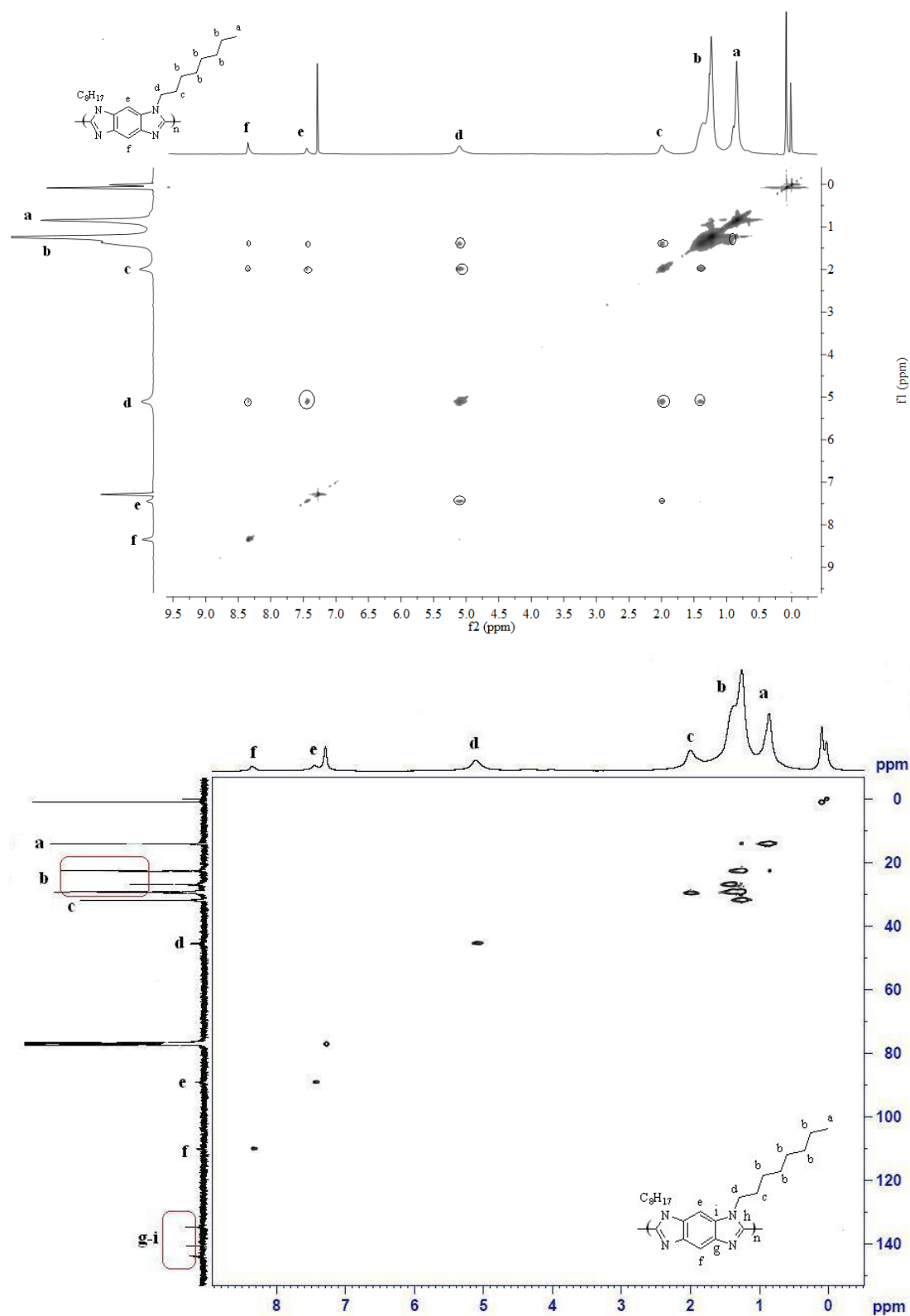


Fig. S4. ^1H - ^1H NOESY and HMQC (^{13}C - ^1H COSY) spectra of PBDI-8.

XI. Copies of ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra

