

Supplementary Information

***In-Situ* Protonated-Phosphorus Interstitial Doping Induces Long-Lived Shallow Charge Trapping in Porous C_{3-x}N₄ Photocatalyst for Highly Efficient H₂ Generation**

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Experimental Procedures

Materials

Urea (AR 99%, Aladdin), red phosphorus (AR 98.5%, Aladdin), triethanolamine (SigmaAldrich), $\text{H}_2\text{PtCl}_6 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (SigmaAldrich). These chemical reagents were used without further purification.

Synthesis of bulk g- C_3N_4

Conventional thermal-polymerization method was employed to synthesize bulk g- C_3N_4 .^[1] Briefly, 10 g urea was heated at 823 K for 4 h, with a ramping rate of 10 K min^{-1} . The yellow bulk g- C_3N_4 was collected after natural cooling and ground into a powder for further use, denoted as BCN.

Synthesis of holey g- $\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4$

Holey g- $\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4$ (denoted as $\text{Ho}@_{\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4}$) was prepared by a facile thermal-exfoliation approach. Typically, BCN (0.5 g) was uniformly put into a rectangular crucible to make sure a good contact between BCN and air, followed by heating at 793 K for 2 h (few-layer), 4 h (ultrathin) and 6 h (holey), with a ramping rate of 5 K min^{-1} . The light-yellow to nearly white powder was obtained, respectively.

Fabrication of phosphorus-interstitial-doping in the $\text{Ho}@_{\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4}$

Phosphorus-interstitial-doping in $\text{Ho}@_{\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4}$ (denoted as $\text{Pi-Ho}@_{\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4}$) was synthesized by the thermal-evaporation method, where x represents the mass of commercial red phosphorus (50-250 mg). In detail, $\text{Ho}@_{\text{C}_3\text{-xN}_4}$ (50 mg) and commercial red phosphorus (x mg) were uniformly placed in two crucibles, respectively, then heated to 723 K for 2 h in Argon with a ramping rate of 5 K min^{-1} .

Photocatalytic Measurements

Briefly, 10.0 mg photocatalyst and a certain amount of $\text{H}_2\text{PtCl}_6 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (3.0 wt% Pt) were mixed and suspended into a 10 vol% triethanolamine aqueous solution under magnetic stirring and sonication in a 100 mL sealed Pyrex flask. Before photocatalytic tests, the above-mentioned suspension was purged via 15 min Argon bubbling to remove oxygen species (e.g., dissolved oxygen). A 300 W Xenon lamp (PerfectLight-SXE300) was equipped with a 400 nm cutoff filter was employed to trigger H_2 production. Evolved H_2 gas was reflected using gas chromatography (GC-7800 BEIJINGPURUI) with Argon as the carrier gas.

Quantum efficiency (QE) was carried out to investigate the solar-to-H₂ efficiency according to the following equation:^[2]

$$QE = \frac{\text{number of evolved H}_2 \text{ molecules} \times 2}{\text{number of incident photons}} \times 100\% = \frac{2R_{\text{H}_2} N_A t_1}{E A t_2 \lambda / hc} \times 100\% = \frac{6.6481 \times 10^{-5} R_{\text{H}_2}}{E A \lambda} \times 100\%$$

where N_A is Avogadro's constant; t₁ and t₂ are the reaction times (h); E is the light intensity (31.2 mW/cm²; A is the irradiation area, 0.64 cm²; λ is a single wavelength (420 nm); h is the Plank constant; and c is the speed of light (m/s); R_{H₂} is the H₂ evolution rate.

Internal quantum efficiency (IQE) was calculated under 400 nm irradiation by using the follow equation:^[3]

$$IQE (\%) = \frac{n(\text{H}_2) \times 2}{n(\text{photons absorbed})} \times 100$$

where n(H₂) and n(photons) refer to the number of H₂ gas generated and the number of photons absorbed, respectively.

Characterizations

Morphological studies via scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and scanning transmission electronic microscopy (STEM) were collected by Hitachi S-4800 and Tecnai G2 20 S-TWIN instruments, respectively. Nitrogen adsorption-desorption experiments and UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra (UV-vis DRS) were done by using Micromeritics Tristar II 3020 and Shimadzu UV2450 instruments. X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements were performed with a Rigacu Smartlab diffractometer. A Perkin-Elmer PHI 5000 instrument was employed to obtain X-ray photoelectron spectra (XPS). Electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) was carried out by uisng Bruker EMX-EPR Spectrometer. Fourier transformation infrared (FTIR) spectra were obtained on an IRAffinity-1 spectrometer (Shimadzu). Steady-state photoluminescence (PL) spectroscopy measurements were recorded by F-7000 Hitachi instrument.

Photoelectrochemical Measurements

Photoelectrochemical measurements were acquired by a commercial electrochemical station (CHI 760E, Chen Hua Instrument Co., Ltd., China). For the working electrode preparation, a photocatalyst (2.0 mg), 1.0 mL of ethanol and 5.0 μL of 10% Nafion solution were mixed together, followed by spin-coating onto a substrate (ITO glass). A suspension was obtained by mixing the as-synthesized material with ethanol. The standard saturated calomel electrode (SCE) and platinum foil was used as the counter electrode and reference electrode, respectively. Na₂SO₄ (0.5 M) aqueous solution was used as the electrolyte. Different from the photocatalytic activity measurement, no Pt nanoparticles were added in the photoelectrochemical tests.

fs-TAS and ns-TAS Setup

fs-TAS measurements were collected with a femtosecond Ti/Sapphire regenerative amplifier laser system (Spitfire-Pro, Spectra-Physics Company), and an automated data acquisition transient absorption spectrometer (Ultrafast, Helios) was used to record the transient absorption spectra of the photocatalysts. The amplifier produced a 150 fs pulse at 800 nm (repetition rate at 1 kHz, average output energy was 2.5 W). In our experiments, the pump laser (400 nm) was obtained from the second harmonic generated from the 800 nm output from the Spitfire amplifier (approximately 95.0 % of the amplified output). The probe pulse (continuum white-light spectrum, 420 to 780 nm) was generated using the remaining 5.0 % of the amplified 800 nm output. Additionally, ns-TAS spectra were collected from a LP-920 laser system (Edinburgh Instruments). The Xenon lamp was the probe light source (450 W, model Xe900), which traversed the sample cell and the signal was recorded by an array detector (absorption mode) and a single detector (kinetic mode). The 355 nm pump laser pulse was generated by the third harmonic output of an Nd: YAG laser. For the fs-TAS and the ns-TAS experiments, all of the as-prepared catalysts were dispersed in water.

DFT Simulations

Density functional theory / time-dependent density functional theory (DFT/TDDFT) calculations were used to examine the charge separation of as-prepared catalysts, and the calculations were performed using the Gaussian16 software suite installed in the high-performance computing cluster at the University of Hong Kong. The B3LYP functional with 6-31G(d) basis set with the solvation model of Polarizable Continuum Model (PCM) in water was used for the geometry optimization. The CAM-B3LYP functional was used for the TDDFT calculations. The iso-surface of electron-hole distribution of the lowest excited states was plotted by Multiwfn. We analyzed the charge density difference (CDD), and electron-hole pair distance (ΔD) of the lowest excited states to characterize the charge separation performance. The formation energy and DOS was carried out using the Vienna Ab initio Simulation Package (VASP) in the framework of the DFT. The projector augmented wave (PAW) method was adopted to solve the Kohn-Sham equations,^[4] and the generalized gradient approximation constructed by Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (GGA-PBE) was selected to describe the exchange-correlation functional.^[5] The unitcell of g-C₃N₄ was first optimized, and then a 1 × 1 × 1 supercell was constructed to accommodate the P dopant, based on which the defect formation energy and electronic properties were calculated. The number of the k-points was set to be 2 × 2 × 1, along with a plane-wave cutoff energy of 480 eV, which made the accuracy within 1 meV per atom.

Band-Gap Calculation

Band-gap energy (E_g) was calculated by the Tauc plots, following the Kubelka-Munk equation:^[6]

$$(\alpha hu)^2 = A(hu - E_g)$$

where α and h are the absorption coefficient and Planck's constant, u and E_g the light frequency and band-gap energy, respectively.

Results and Discussion

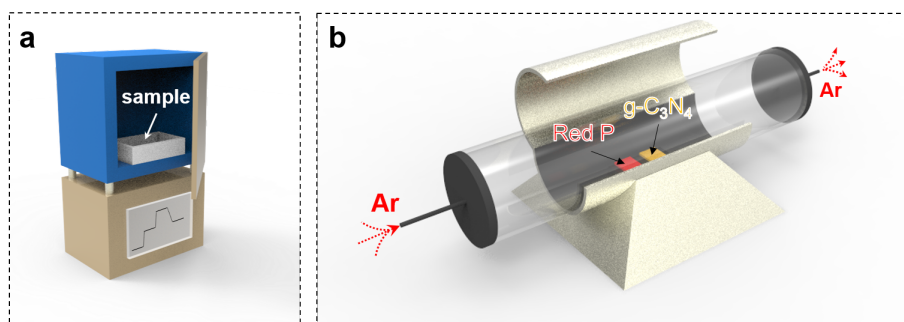


Fig. S1 (a) Thermal polycondensation and exfoliation system in air (b) thermal doping system under inert gas (Ar) protection.

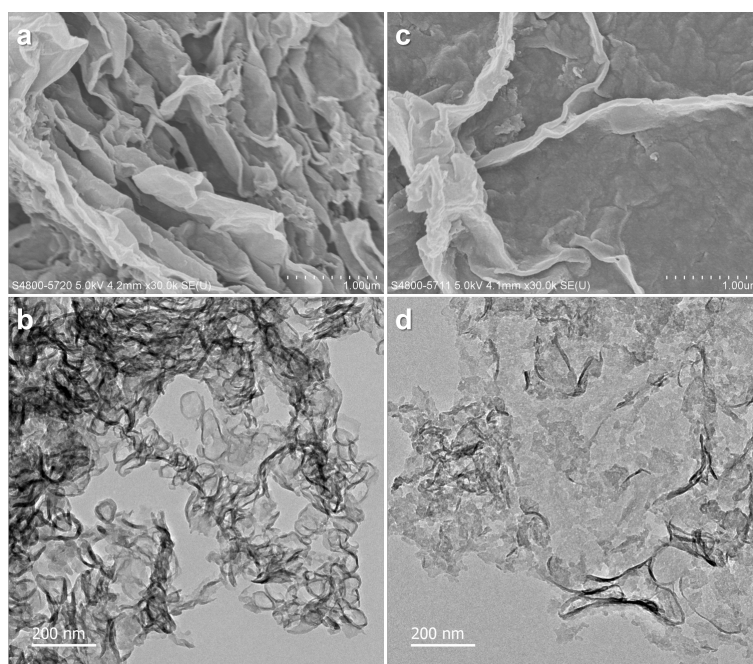


Fig. S2 SEM and STEM images of (a,b) FCN and (c,d) UCN, respectively.

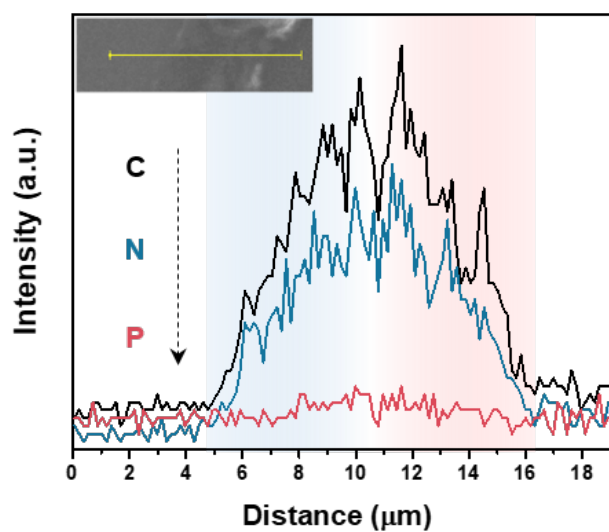


Fig. S3 EDX elements linear distribution of Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ sample.

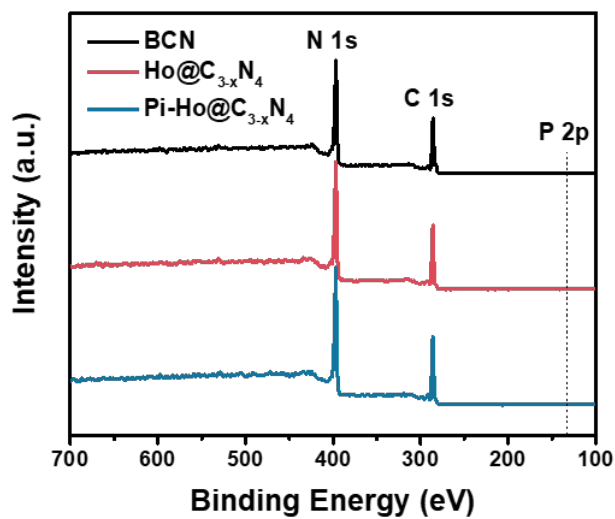


Fig. S4 XPS wide spectra of BCN, Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ and Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄, respectively.

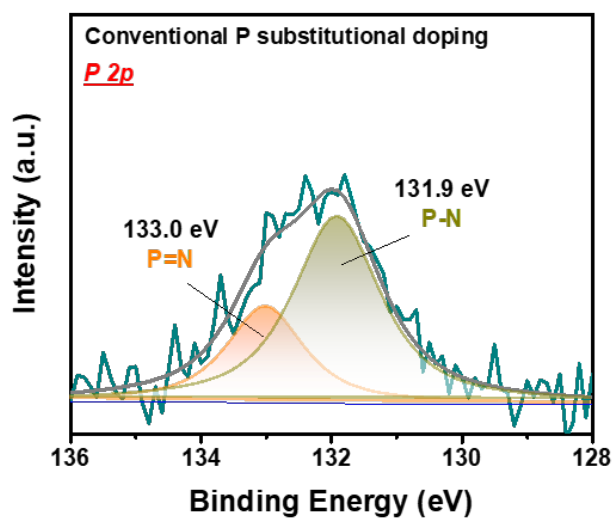


Fig. S5 High resolution XPS spectra for P 2p of phosphorus substitutional doped BCN.

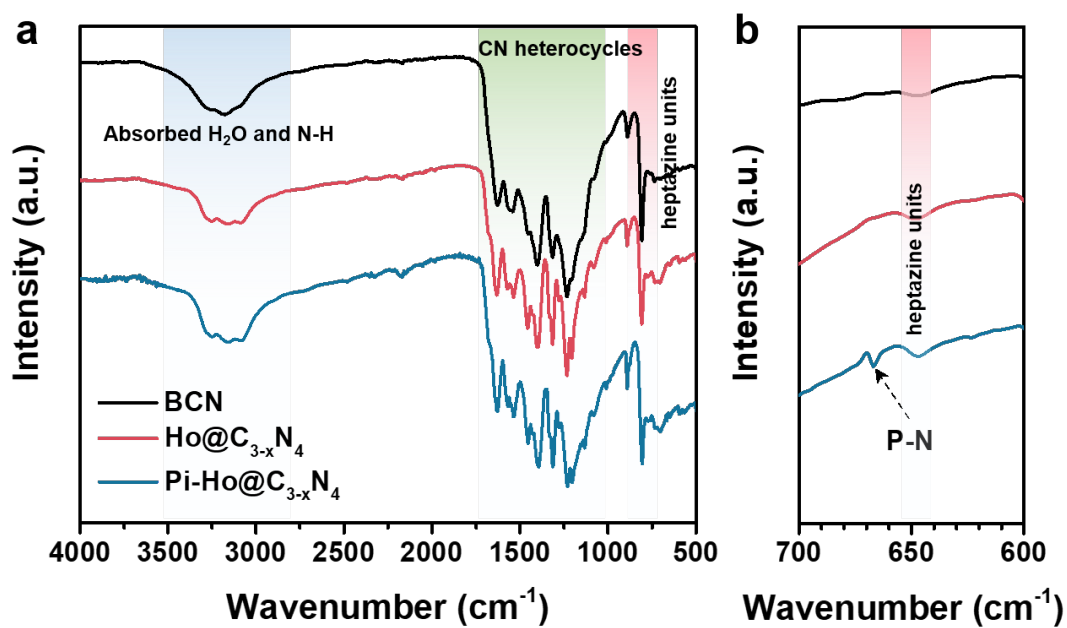


Fig. S6 FTIR profiles of BCN, Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ and Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄, respectively.

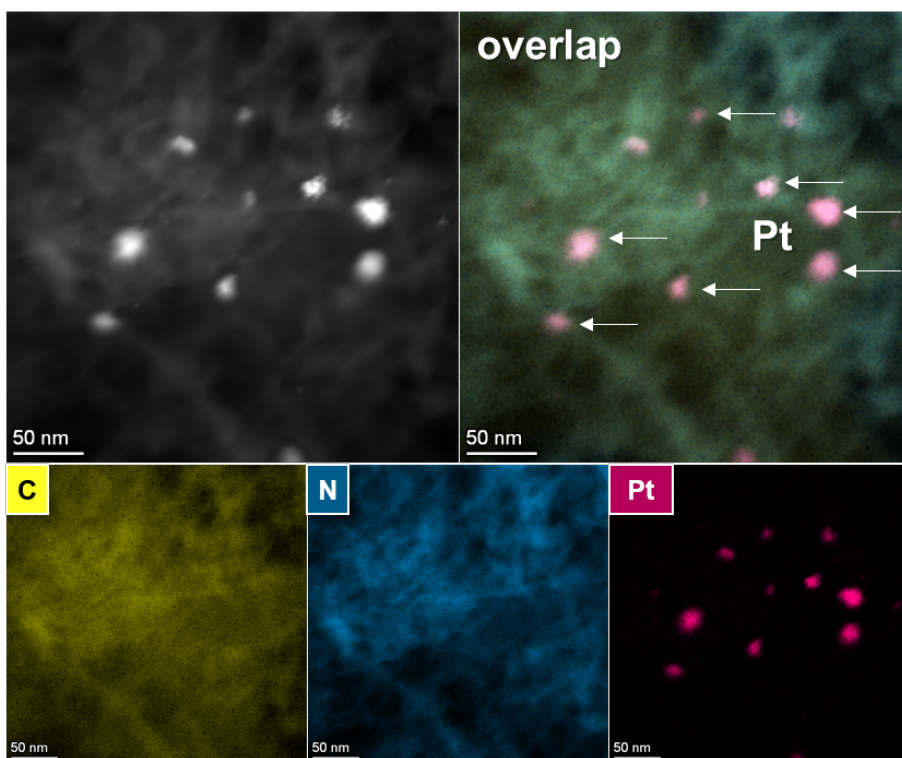


Fig. S7 Morphological study and EDX-mapping of co-catalyst (Pt) on the Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ surface.

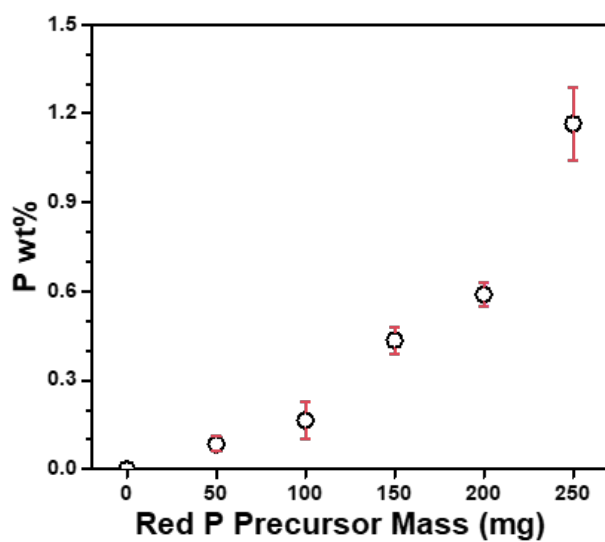


Fig. S8 P weight percent in each sample from EDX statistics.

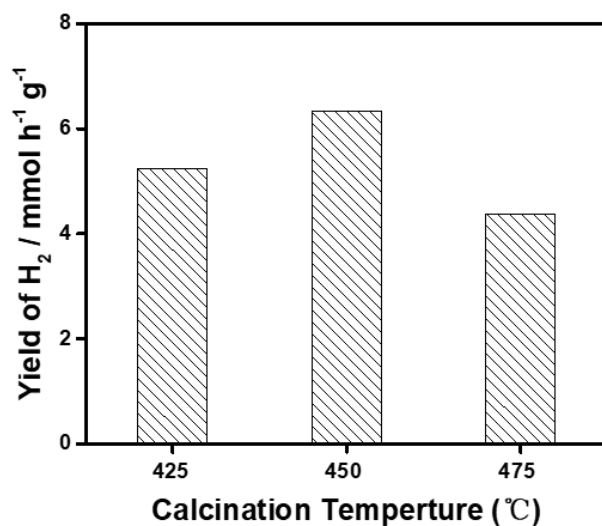


Fig. S9 Comparison of photocatalytic H₂ production activity using synthesized Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ catalysts with different calcination temperatures.

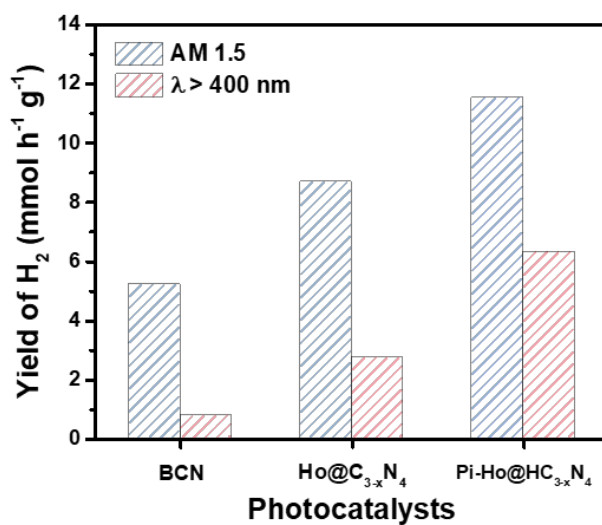


Fig. S10 Comparison of photocatalytic H₂ production activity of BCN, Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ and Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ under visible-light and simulated sunlight irradiation, respectively.

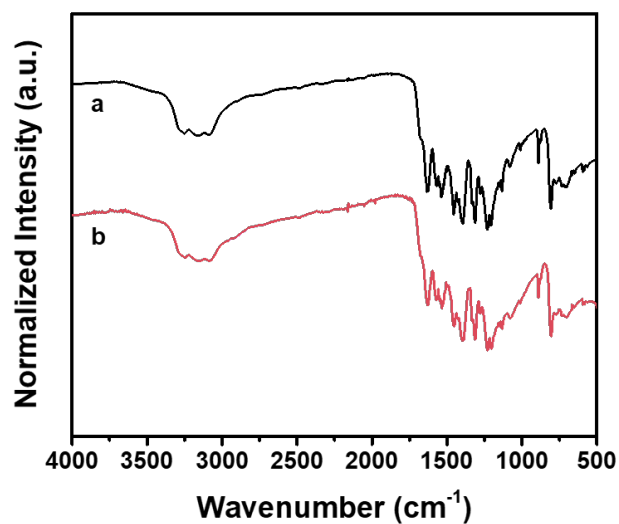


Fig. S11 FTIR profiles of Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ sample: before (a) and after (b) cyclic runs of photocatalytic H₂ production reaction.

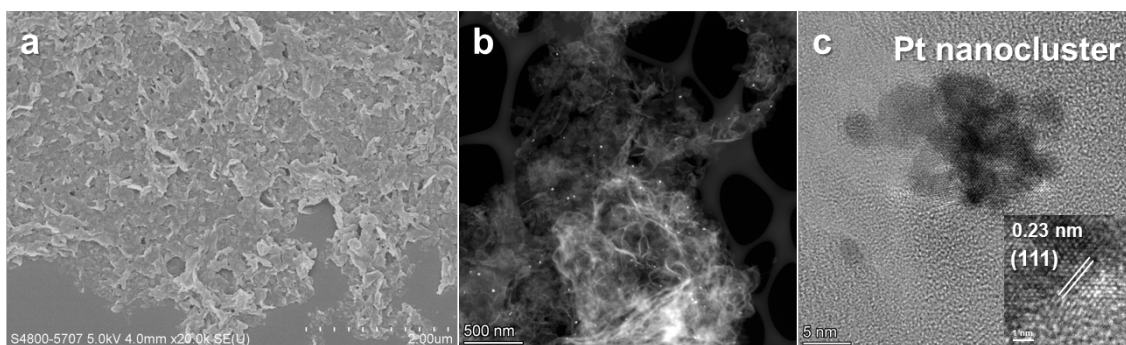


Fig. S12 (a) SEM and (b) STEM image of the Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ sample after cyclic runs of photocatalytic H₂ production reaction; (c) high-resolution STEM image of Pt nanoclusters on Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ surface.

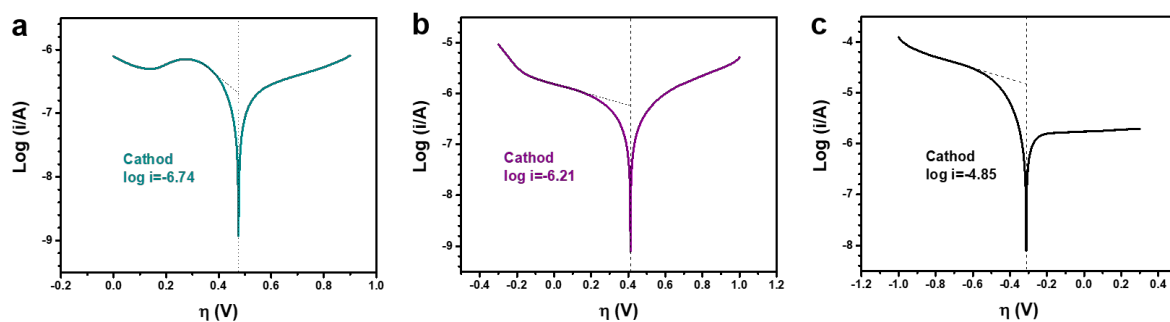


Fig. S13 Tafel plot of (a) BCN, (b) Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ and (c) Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄.

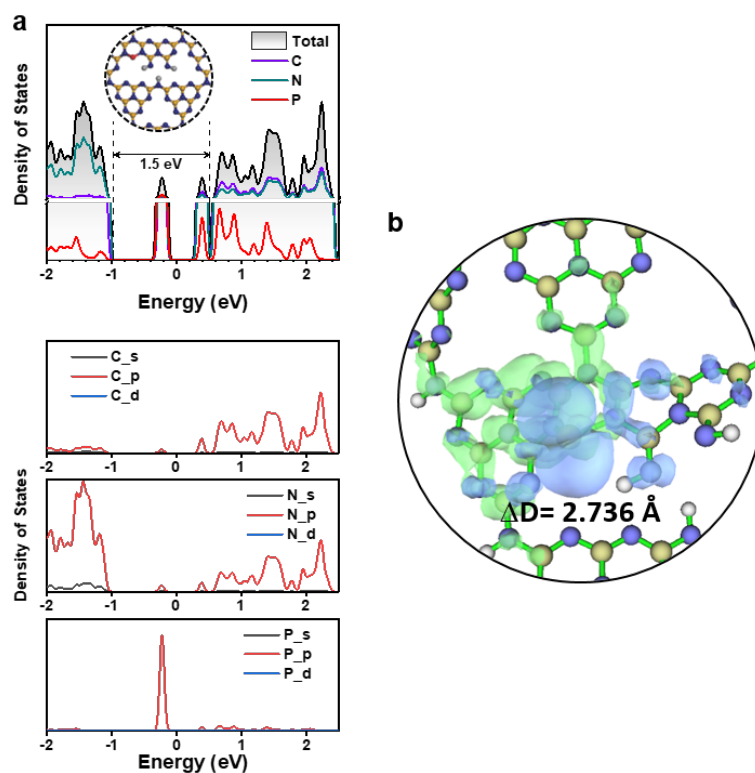


Fig. S14 (a) Calculated density of states (DOS) and (b) Charge density difference of the Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ during the S₀-S₁ transition, calculated using the B3LYP functional with the 6-31G basis set; the green and blue meshes represent the electrons and the holes during the S₀-S₁ transition, respectively.

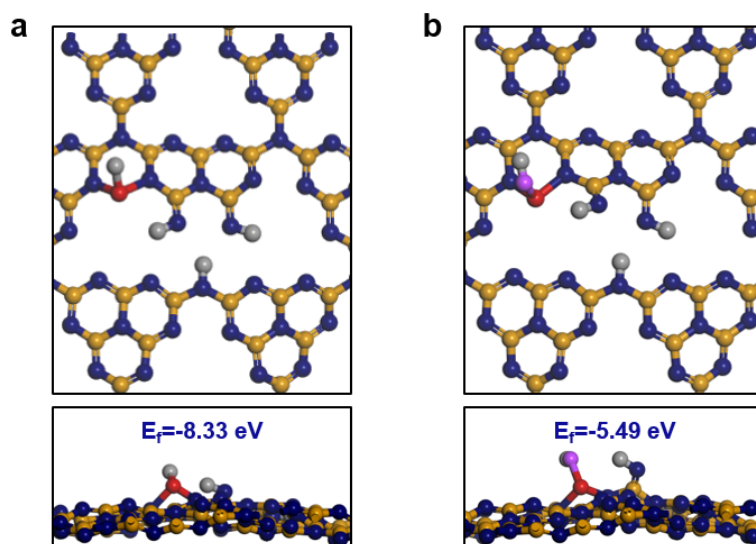


Fig. S15 Simulate the formation energy of the $\text{Pi-Ho@C}_{3-x}\text{N}_4$ with (a) proton and (b) hydroxy at the interstitial phosphorus-site.

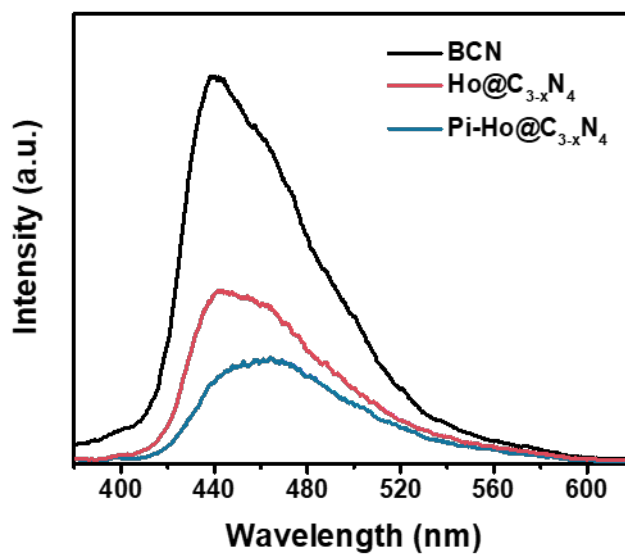


Fig. S16 Steady-state photoluminescence (PL) emission in the inert medium (acetonitrile) under 355 nm laser flash.

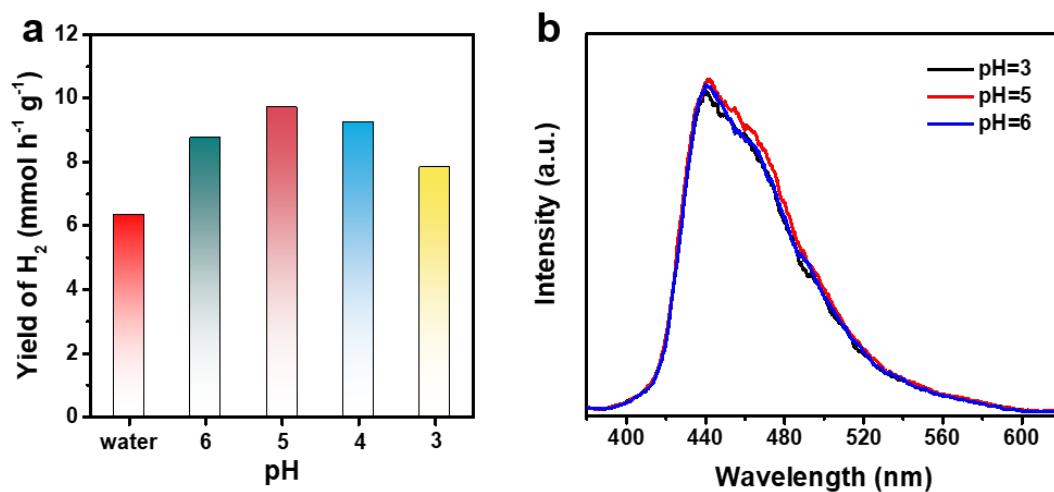


Fig. S17 (a) Comparison of H₂ evolution rates of the Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ photocatalyst in different pH solution; (b) the corresponding steady-state photoluminescence (PL) emission under 355 nm laser flash.

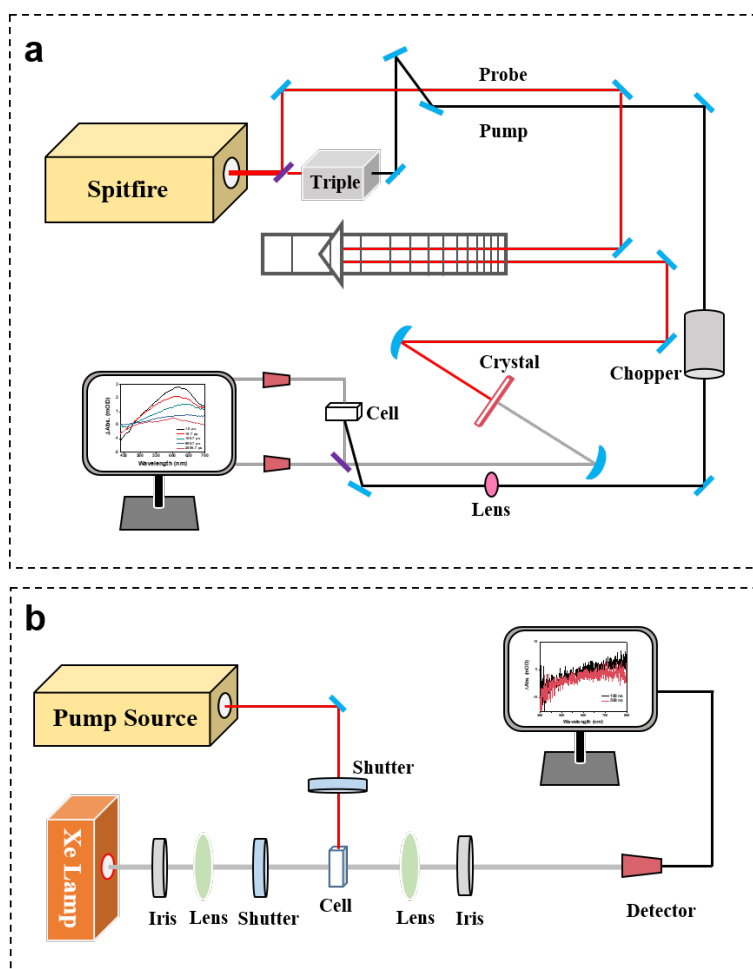


Fig. S18 Schematic illustration of (a) fs-TAS and (b) ns-TAS setup.

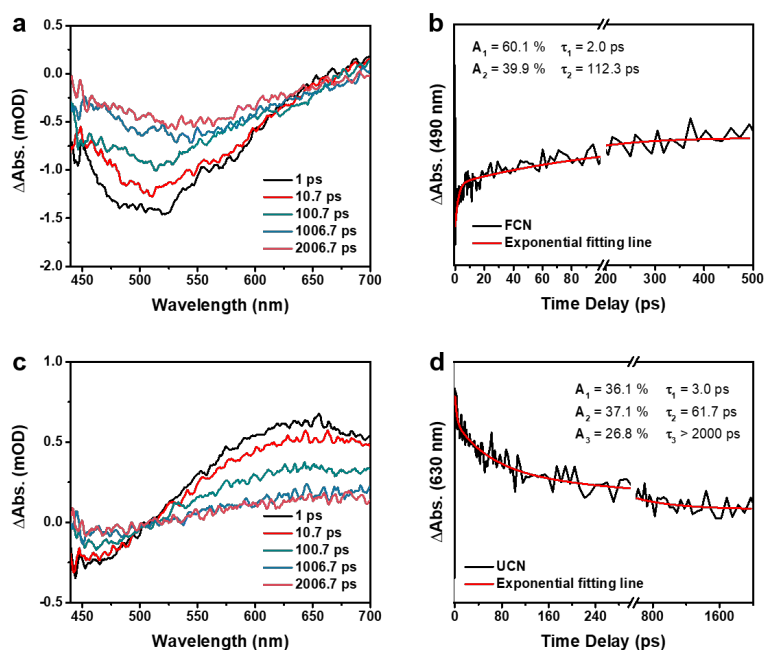


Fig. S19 fs-TAS and kinetics decay process of (a, b) BCN and (c, d) FCN in water.

As a reference, the fs-TAS of FCN and UCN were carried out to determine the kinetic decay process. Compared to the BCN sample, the FCN also shows a broad negative absorption feature from 450 to 650 nm due to the simulate emissions. The shorter lifetime of τ_1 (2.0 ps) and τ_2 (112.3 ps) and the positive absorption in 650-700 nm area demonstrated the enhanced separation of the charge carriers. For UCN, three-time constants with 3.0 ps (τ_1), 61.7 ps (τ_2) and > 2 ns (τ_3) can be assigned to electron-hole recombination, hole trapping and deep electron trapping processes, respectively.

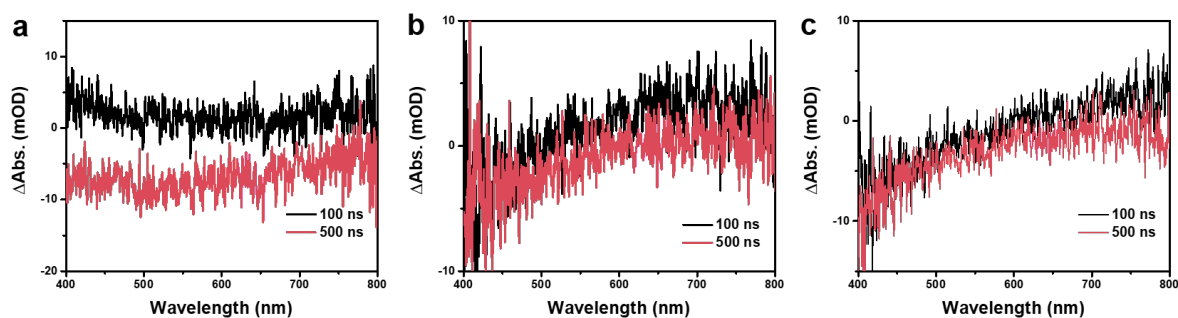


Fig. S20 ns-TAS of (a) BCN, (b) Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ and (c) Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄.

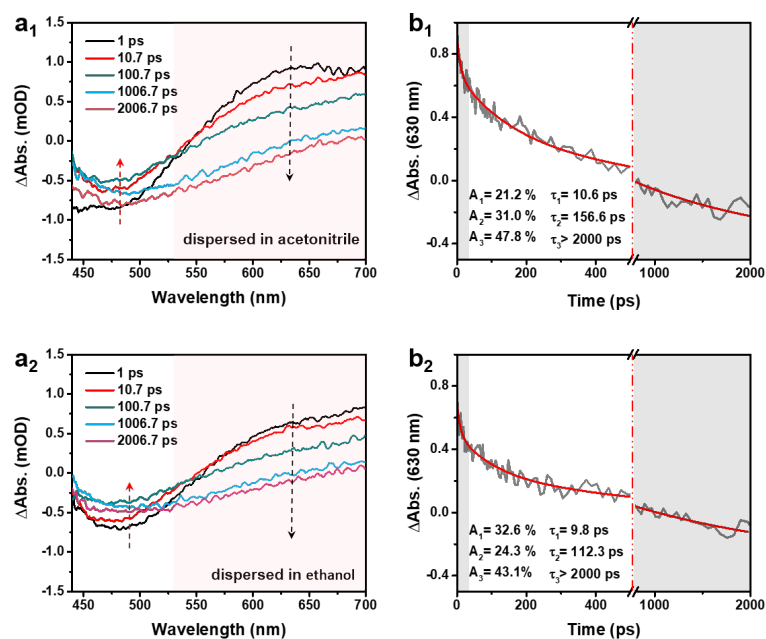


Fig. S21 (a) fs-TAS, and (b) kinetics decay process of the Pi-Ho@C_{3-x}N₄ sample in inert solvents: (a₁-b₁) acetonitrile and (a₂-b₂) ethanol.

Table S1. Photocatalytic H₂ production performance of the conventional P-doped g-C₃N₄ photocatalysts (from 2015 to 2022).

Sample	Co-cat.	Reactant Solution	Light	Photocativity	Year	Ref.
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1 wt% Pt	20 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 400$ nm	1596 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2015	[7]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1 wt% Pt	20 vol% MeOH	$\lambda > 420$ nm	67 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (670 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2016	[8]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1 wt% Pt	20 vol% MeOH	$\lambda > 420$ nm	57 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (570 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2017	[9]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 400$ nm	256.4 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (5125 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2018	[10]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	941.8 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2018	[11]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda \geq 420$ nm	2020 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2019	[12]
P,Mo-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	eosin Y (sensitizer)	5 vol% TEOA	$\lambda \geq 420$ nm	118 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2019	[13]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	171.6 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (5720 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2020	[14]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	2 wt% Pt	20 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	2814 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2021	[15]
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	MoP	20 vol% TEOA	300 W Xenon-lamp	4917.83 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2022	[16]
Pi-Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 400$ nm	6323 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2022	This work

Table S2. Photocatalytic H₂ production performance of other heteroatom-doped g-C₃N₄ photocatalysts (from 2012 to 2022).

Sample	Co-cat.	Reactant Solution	Light	Photoactivity	Year	Ref.
O-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1.2 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda < 420$ nm	37.5 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (375 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2012	[17]
S-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	15 vol% MeOH	$\lambda > 420$ nm	136 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2012	[18]
I-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	38 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (760 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2014	[19]
I-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	44.5 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (890 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2015	[20]
N-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	64 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (1280 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2016	[21]
Br-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda \geq 420$ nm	45 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (900 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2016	[22]
Co-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	28 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2017	[23]
O-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	15 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	732 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2018	[24]
S-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	5 wt% Ni	20 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	2021.3 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2018	[25]
B,S-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	1 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda \geq 420$ nm	53.2 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (2660 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2018	[26]
C-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	0.5 wt% Pt	15 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	25.0 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (2500 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2019	[27]
S-doped g-C ₃ N ₄ /BiPO ₄	3 wt% Pt	17 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	11.7 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (1170 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2020	[28]
O-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	2 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	73.84 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1}$ (3692 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	2021	[29]
O-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	3 wt% Pt	20 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 420$ nm	395.96 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2021	[30]
S-doped g-C ₃ N ₄	19.3 wt% N-doped MoS ₂	10 vol% TEOA	300 W Xenon-lamp	658.5 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2021	[31]
Pi-Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	3 wt% Pt	10 vol% TEOA	$\lambda > 400$ nm	6323 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$	2022	This work

Table S3. Exponential function fitted parameters of fs-TAS.

Sample	Probe at 630 nm (ESA)						Probe at 460 nm (SE)			
	A ₁ [%]	τ_1 [ps]	A ₂ [%]	τ_2 [ps]	A ₃ [%]	τ_3 [ps]	A ₁ [%]	τ_1 [fs]	A ₂ [%]	τ_2 [ps]
BCN	-	-	-	-	-	-	82.1	550	17.9	25.9
Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	46.5	6.0	39.8	189.9	13.7	> 2000	94.2	222	5.8	17.2
Pi-Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	48.9	17.9	45.6	405.5	5.5	> 2000	98.3	< 150	1.7	0.5

Table S4. Comparison of exponential function fitted parameters of ns-TAS.

Sample	A [%]	τ [ns]
BCN	100	110.5
Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	100	4.9
Pi-Ho@C _{3-x} N ₄	100	4.6

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