

Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) for

Low-Molecular-Weight Supramolecular Adhesives based on Non-covalent Self-assembly of Small Molecular Gelator

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Section S1 Methods

1. Materials

Urea (AR, 99%), Choline Chloride (AR, 98%), Chlormequat chloride (AR, 98%), Ethylamine hydrochloride (AR, 98%), and Dodecyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (AR, 99%) were purchased from Tokyo Chemical Industry Company. Hexyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (AR, 98%), Trimethyl octyl ammonium bromide (AR, 98%), Decyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (AR, 99%), Myristyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (AR, 99%), Cetyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (AR, 98%), Trimethyl octadecyl ammonium bromide (AR, 98%), Thiourea (ACS, 99%), 1,3-Dimethylurea (AR, 98%) were purchased from Beijing Innochem Science & Technology Co. Ltd.. Acetamide (AR, 99%) and Tetramethyl ammonium chloride (AR, 99%) were purchased from Acros. All other chemicals used in this work are commercial analytical grade reagents without further purification.

2. Instruments

Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) profiles were performed using a Bruker D8 Advance X-ray diffractometer using Cu K α radiation at 25 °C. FTIR spectra of the samples were measured by Nicolet 5700 FTIR. Carle Zeiss LSM710 confocal laser scanning microscope, scanning electron microscope (SEM, JSM-7001F) and transmission electron microscope (TEM, JEM 2100) were used to observe the morphology of the eutectogels. Rheological tests were performed by using a Hake Mars rheometer (Thermo Scientific) with a parallel plate geometry (20 mm, 0.5 mm gap). Frequency sweeps were conducted from 0.1 to 100 rad s⁻¹ at a fixed strain of 0.1%. Strain sweeps were conducted from 0.1% to 100% at a fixed frequency of 1 Hz. Temperature-dependent rheological tests were conducted at a fixed shear rate of 1 rad s⁻¹. The temperature range of the rotated rheometer was adjusted from 5 to 80 °C. The lap shear test conducted by a UTM2202 or UTM2503 electronic universal testing machine with a pull rate of 10 mm s⁻¹ (at least three parallel samples were used for each measurement). For each test, the adhesion area on the surfaces was about 2.0 cm \times 3.0 cm.

3. Preparation of deep eutectic solvents (DESs)

DES was prepared by stirring choline chloride (ChCl) and urea in a mole ratio of 1:2 at 60 °C until a homogeneous solution was formed. The obtained DES was referred to as ChCl-urea. Other DESs were prepared following a similar procedure.

4. Preparation of the supramolecular eutectogels

Taking 25.0 wt% dodecyl trimethyl ammonium bromide (C₁₂TAB) supramolecular eutectogel as an example: C₁₂TAB (400.0 mg, 1.3 mmol) was added to a clean vial, followed by addition of 1200.0 mg ChCl-urea DES. The system was heated (~100 °C) until the solid was totally dissolved, after which the solution was allowed to cool to room temperature. Eutectogel was considered to have formed when no gravitational flow occurred upon inversion of the vial. The gel-sol phase transition temperatures of the eutectogels were tested by falling ball method, and the critical gelator concentration was the lowest concentration that can form a stable gel evaluated by invert tube method. The dried C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels for SEM, FTIR and XRD test were prepared via a solvent-exchange method. Other supramolecular eutectogels were prepared following a similar procedure.

5. Adhesion test

Preparation of adhesive layers in air and dry surface. C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea supramolecular eutectogel adhesive was prepared following a similar procedure to the bulk material as described above. Briefly, 400.0 mg of C₁₂TAB (1.3 mmol) was completely dissolved into 1200.0 mg ChCl-urea DES upon heating. The obtained homogenous solution before gelation was then pipetted on different substrates including glass, wood and various metal plates, poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) and polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE). And then another substrate was covered on the coating layer. After pressing for ~2 min in air at room temperature, the two plates adhered immediately and firmly together. The adhered plates were further used for lap-shear test. For each test, the adhesion area on the surfaces was about 2.0 cm × 3.0 cm, the volume of the adhesive was about 0.1 mL, and thickness of the adhesive between substrates was about 0.17 mm. The pressing load was about 3 kPa. Other adhesive layers were also prepared following a similar procedure.

Underwater, organic solvents and low temperature adhesion test. The preparation of the adhesive layers was similar as described above, but the whole process was carried out in the presence of water, organic solvents or at low temperatures. The low temperature environment (from 0 °C to -80 °C) was controlled via a ultra-low temperature freezer (MeLing company, China).

Ultra-low temperature resistant adhesion tests. The fabrication of the adhesive layers was the same as the solvent-free process. For ultra-low temperature resistant adhesion at -196 °C, the plates were adhered at room temperature, then totally immersed in liquid nitrogen (-196 °C) for more than 1 h before testing (See Video S1). The adhesion strength was immediately tested after the sample was taken out.

6. Computational simulation

Simulation of C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel. The geometric optimization of urea, choline and C₁₂TAB molecules was calculated using Gaussian 16 program¹ in the gas phase by a density functional theory (DFT) method on the B3LYP/6-31G(d) level.² The atomic charges of the molecules were calculated by electrostatic surface potential fits, using the Multiwfn program,³ to obtain restrained electrostatic potential (RESP) charge⁴ at the same level.

Molecular dynamics (MD) simulations were conducted using the Gromacs 2020.4 package⁵ with GAFF force field.⁶ A periodic solvent box was built for the mixture of urea, choline, and C₁₂TAB using Packmol.⁷ 4000 urea molecule, 2000 choline and chloride ion, and 720 C₁₂TAB and bromide ion were added to the box to reproduce the experimental molar fractions of the gel mixture. The concentration of C₁₂TAB in the simulation were set to around 400 mg mL⁻¹, which is consistent with the experimental system (25.0 wt%). For C₁₂TAB water solution, 720 C₁₂TAB and bromide ion were added to the box and then filled with water using SPC/E model. After energy minimization of the box, a 1ns MD simulation was carried out in the NPT ensemble to equilibrate the system at a constant pressure of 1 bar and 298 K, coupled to a velocity-rescale thermostat⁸ and Berendsen barostat.⁹ To obtain the global minimum configuration, two cycles of annealing were carried out at 298 to 800 K in NPT ensemble. During the annealing process, the structure was further relaxed to obtain a steady state with a local energy minimum. Then the box was simulated for 2.5 ns to obtain equilibrated C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel in an NPT

ensemble at 293 K and 1 bar, where the temperature and pressure were controlled by velocity-rescale and Parrinello–Rahman algorithms.¹⁰ The time step of the simulation is 2 fs. Non-bonded interactions were calculated up to a cut-off of 1.0 nm. The particle mesh Ewald method¹¹ was used for treating long-range electrostatic interactions.

Simulation of the interaction of C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels with SiO₂ and PTFE substrate.

In order to further study the interaction mechanisms between C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels and different substrates, MD simulation was performed to obtain the interaction configuration and calculate interaction energy. In this work, a periodic box of C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel and substrate was built using Packmol program.⁷ For glass substrate, 1660 urea molecule, 830 choline and chloride ion, 300 C₁₂TAB and bromide ion (corresponding to the concentration of 400 mg mL⁻¹) and a 98.3 × 68.1 × 16.2 nm³ SiO₂ substrate were added to the box to build the adhesion model. For PTFE, SiO₂ was replaced with a PTFE substrate modeling by 100 tetrafluoroethylene polymer.

MD simulations were conducted using the Gromacs 2020.4 package⁵ with GAFF force field⁶ for urea, choline, C₁₂TAB and PTFE, and charmm27¹² force field for SiO₂ substrate with parameters provided by previous work.¹³ After energy minimization of the box, 500ps MD simulation was carried out in the NPT ensemble to equilibrate the system at a constant pressure of 1 bar and 298 K, coupled to a velocity-rescale thermostat⁸ and Berendsen barostat.⁹ Afterwards, two cycles of annealing were carried out at 298 to 800 K in NPT ensemble for SiO₂ substrate system. For PTFE substrate system, the annealing was from 298 to 600 K to maintain the stability of the system. Finally, 2.5 ns NPT simulation was performed to get the equilibrated adhesion configuration. The time step of the simulation is 1.0 fs.

To calculate the interaction energy between C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels and different substrate, we reran the trajectory generated in 2.5 ns NPT simulation where the non-bonded interactions and electrostatic interactions were all calculated up to a cut-off of 3.0 nm. The interaction energy was defined as the sum of non-bonded and electrostatic interaction energy.

Section S2 Characterization of C_nTAB eutectogels

Table S1. The gelation properties of C_nTAB in ChCl-urea DES.

C _n TAB	Gelation behaviors ^a	T _{gels} (°C) ^b	CGCs (wt%) ^c
C ₆ TAB	OG	55.3	22.5
C ₈ TAB	OG	43.2	2.1
C ₁₀ TAB	OG	48.7	0.2
C ₁₂ TAB	OG	52.2	0.2
C ₁₄ TAB	OG	67.4	0.2
C ₁₆ TAB	OG	65.7	0.2
C ₁₈ TAB	OG	60.3	2.9

a: Gelation behaviors were evaluated by inverted tube method at the concentration of 3.0 wt% except for C₆TAB, which was evaluated at 25.0 wt%. OG = opaque gel. b: the gel-to-sol phase transition temperatures (T_{gels}, °C) were determined by using the “falling-ball method” at the concentration of 3.0 wt% except for C₆TAB, which was evaluated at 25.0 wt%. c: the critical gelator concentrations (CGCs) were recorded as the minimum concentration of C_nTAB that needed to form a stable eutectogel.

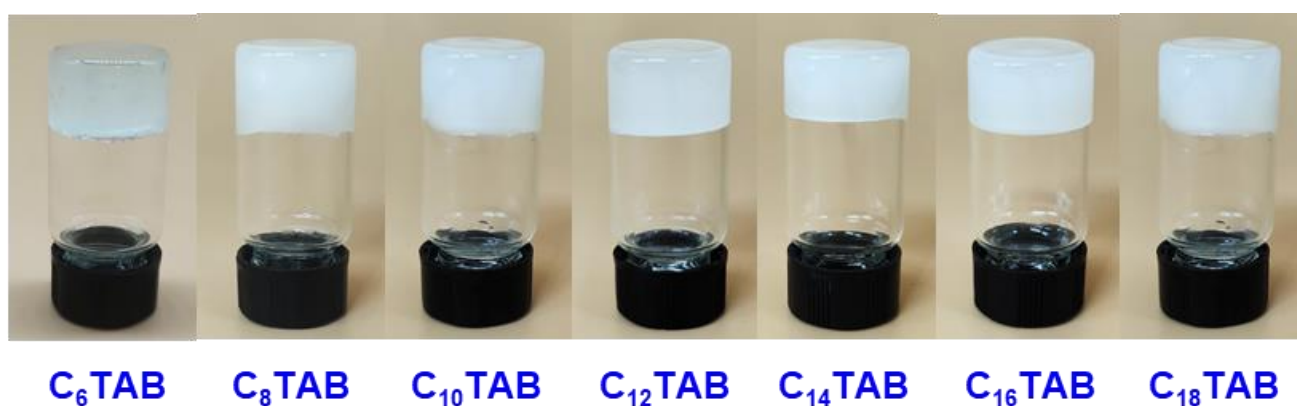


Figure S1. Gelation behaviors of C_nTAB in ChCl-urea DES. The concentration was 25.0 wt% for C₆TAB, and 3.0 wt% for others.

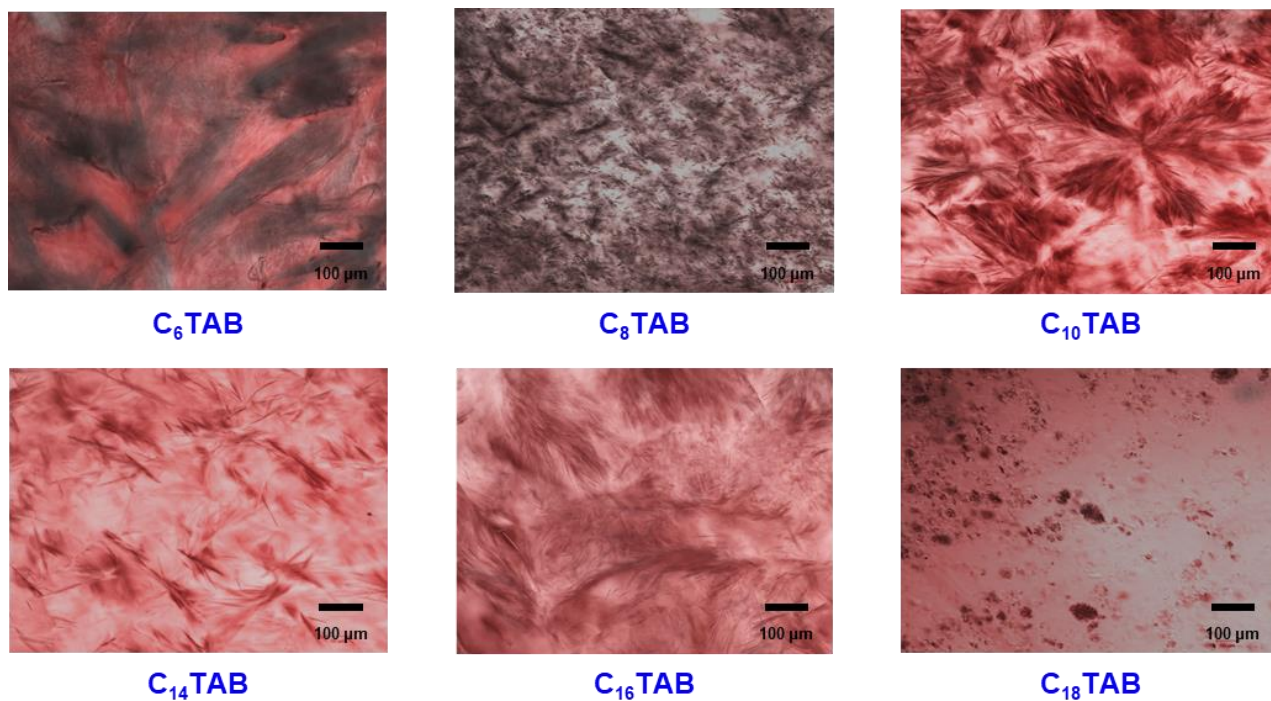


Figure S2. CLSM images of C_n TAB eutectogels in ChCl-urea DES. The concentration was 25.0 wt% for C_6 TAB, and 3.0 wt% for others. The eutectogels were labeled with fluorescein rhodamine B, a red fluorescence probe.

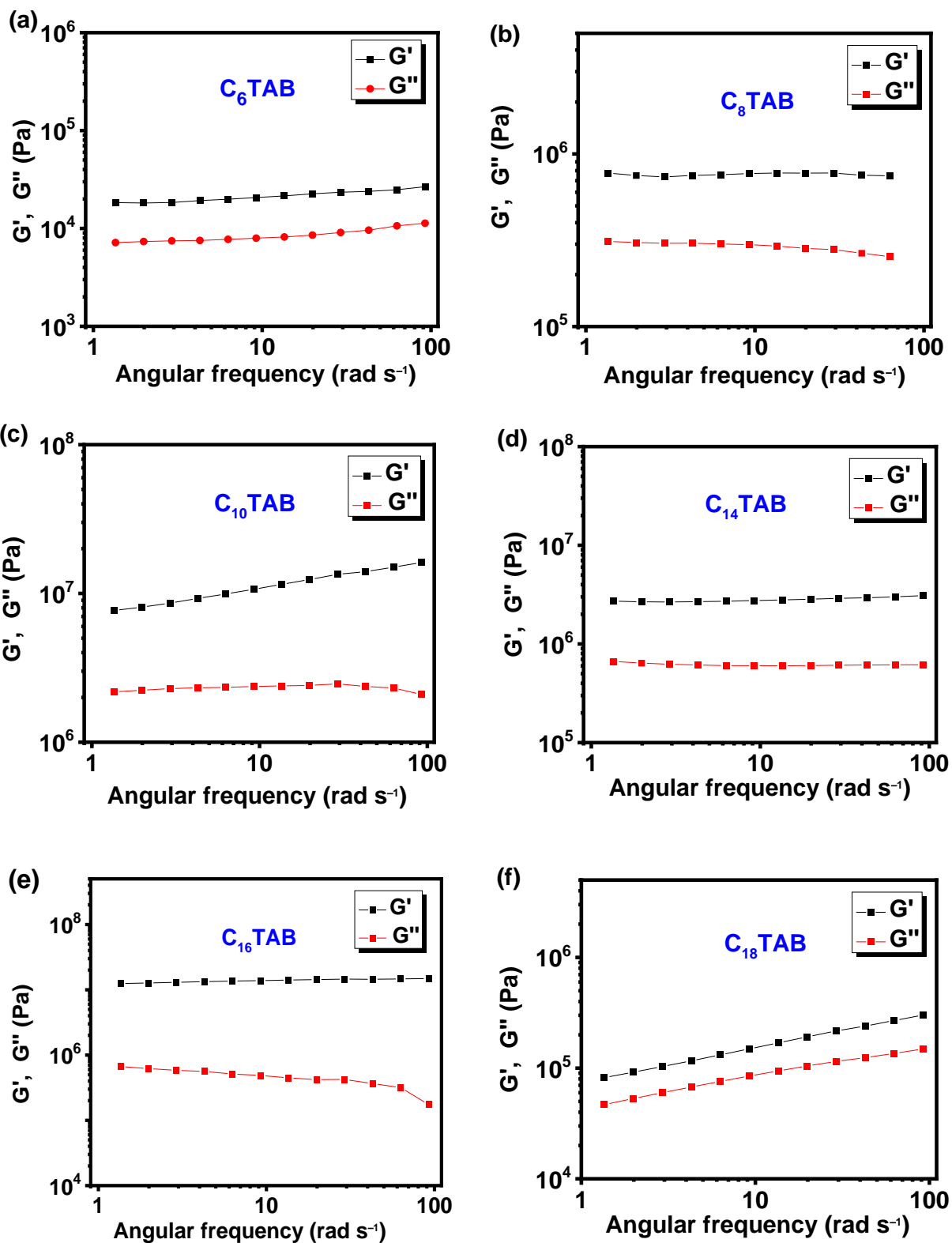


Figure S3. Dynamic frequency sweep of 25.0 wt% C_n TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels

($n = 6, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18$) at strain of 0.1%.

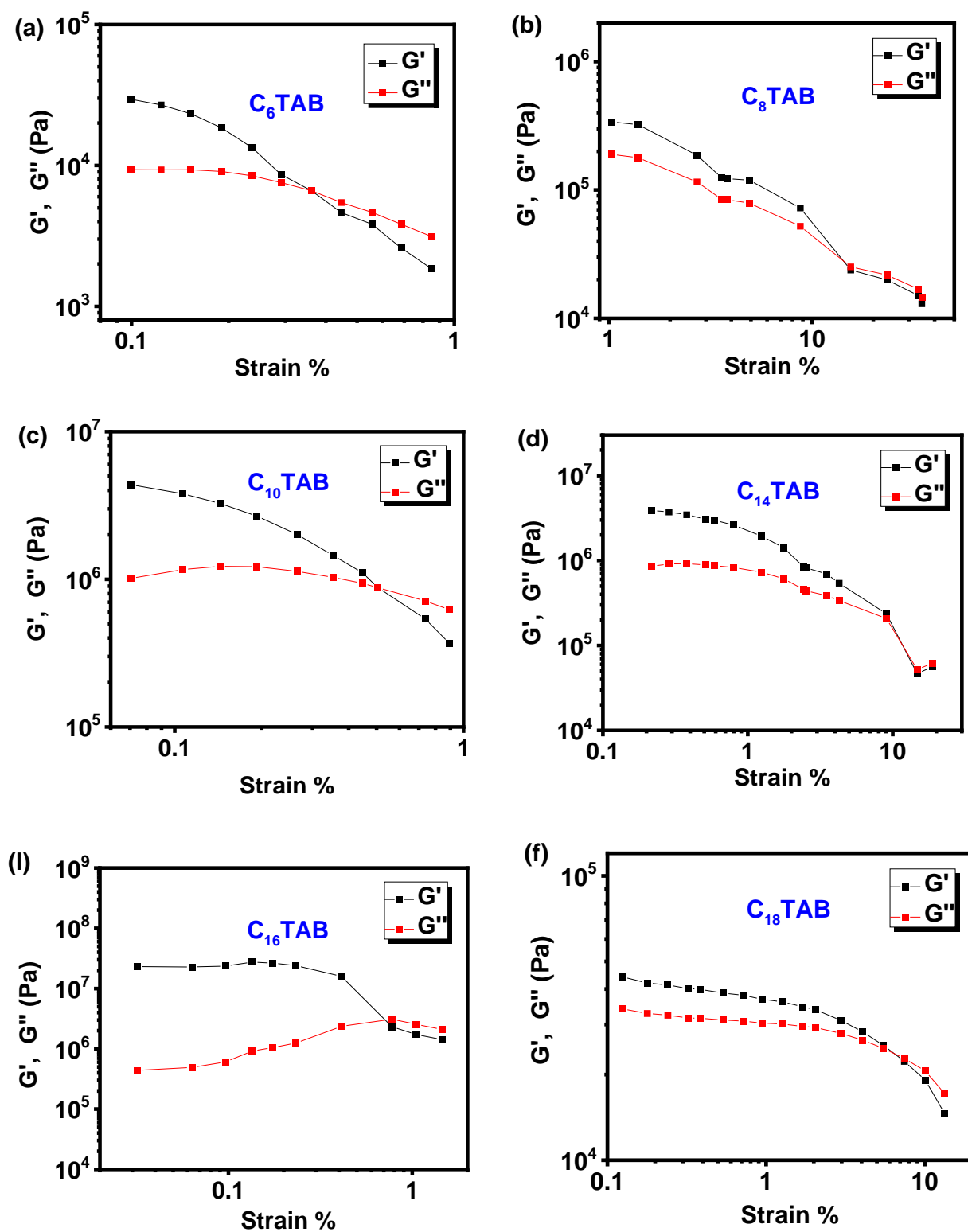


Figure S4. Dynamic strain sweep of 25.0 wt% C_n TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels

($n = 6, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18$) at frequency of 1 Hz.

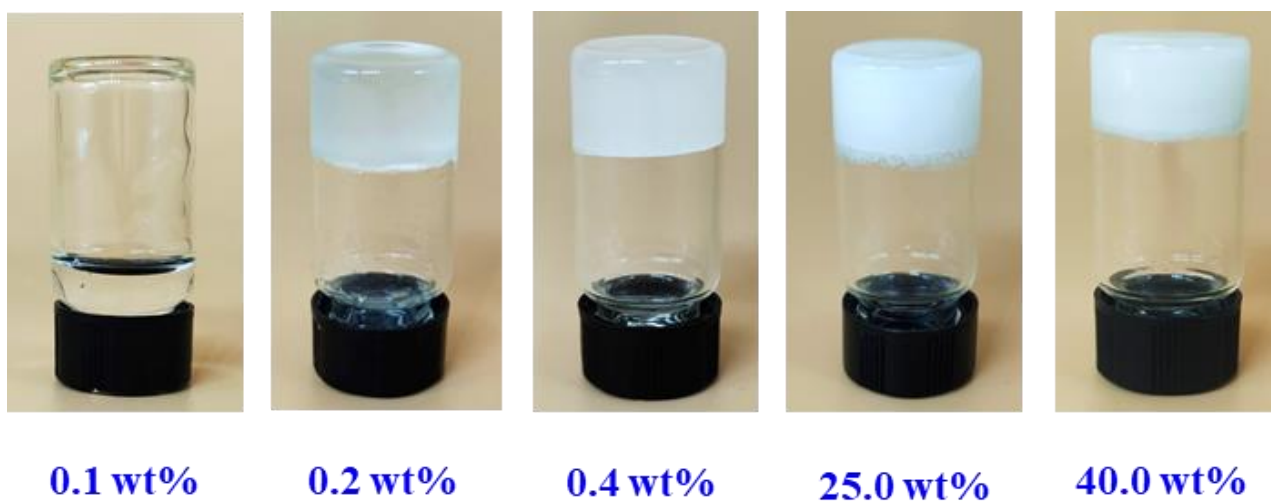


Figure S5. Appearance of C₁₂TAB in ChCl-urea DES at different concentrations.

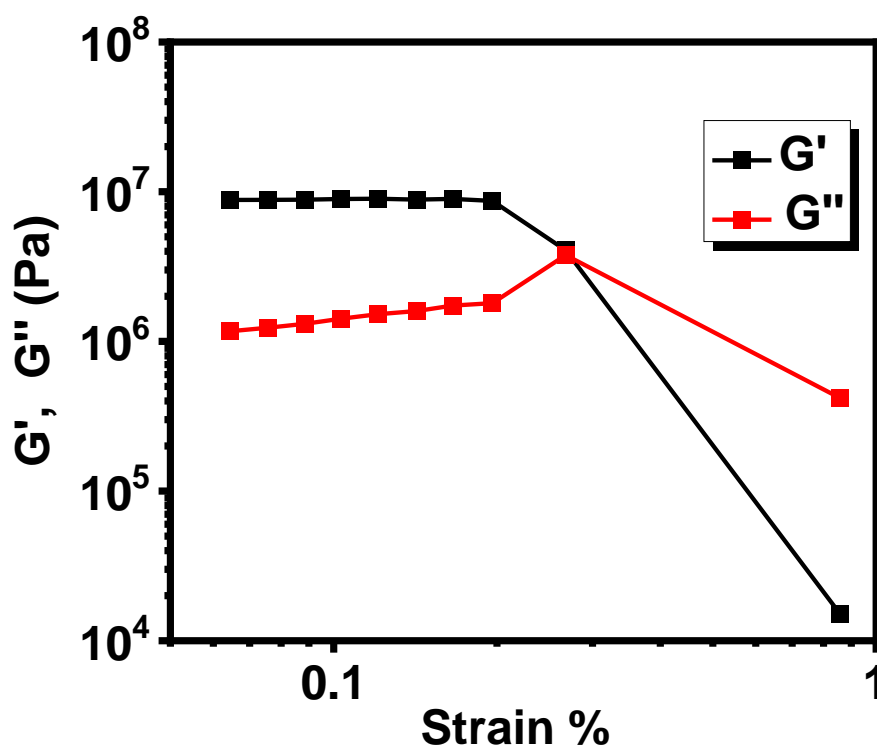


Figure S6. Dynamic strain sweep of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels at frequency of 1 Hz.

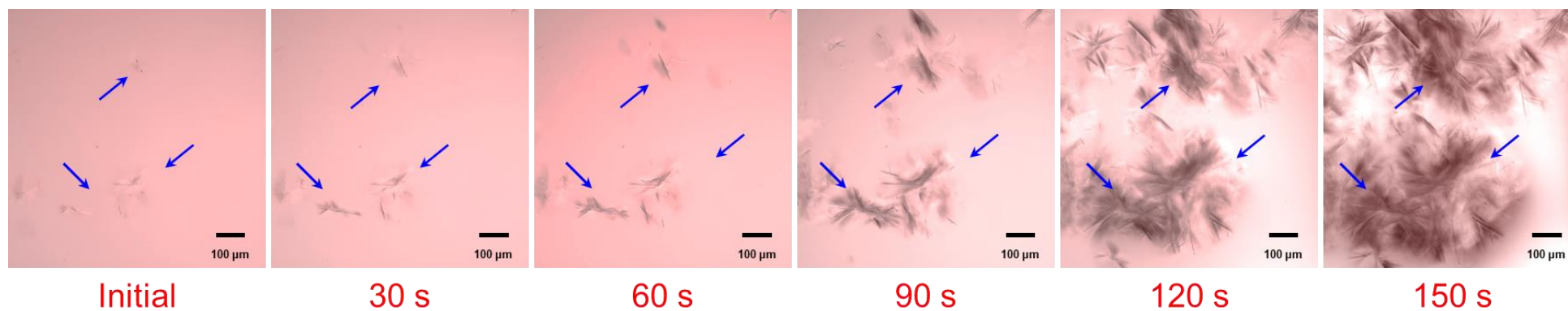


Figure S7. Time-lapse CLSM images of 2.0 wt% $C_{12}TAB/ChCl$ -urea supramolecular eutectogel under different time intervals. The eutectogel was labeled with fluorescein rhodamine B, a red fluorescence probe.

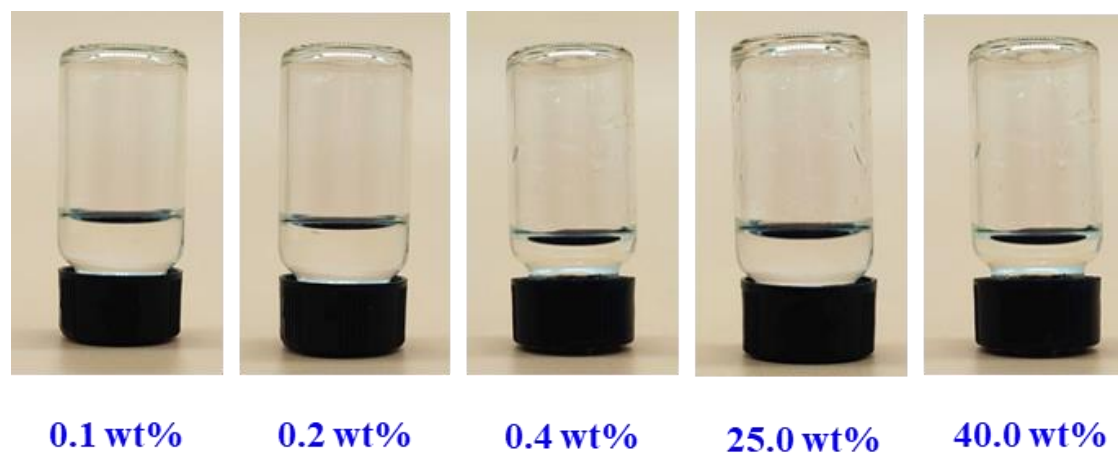


Figure S8. Appearance of $C_{12}TAB$ in water at different concentrations.

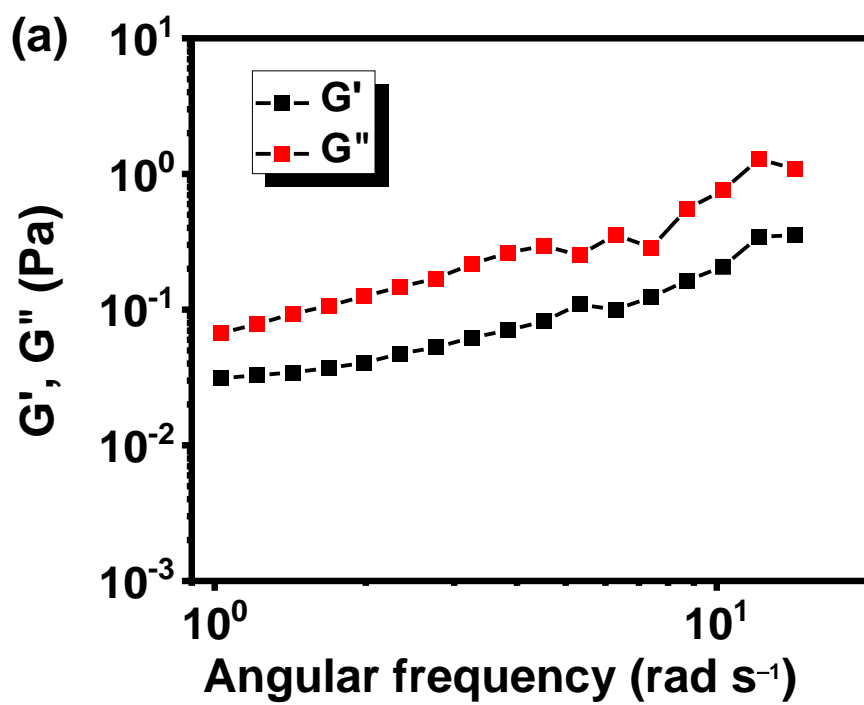


Figure S9. Dynamic frequency sweep of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB in water at strain of 0.1%.

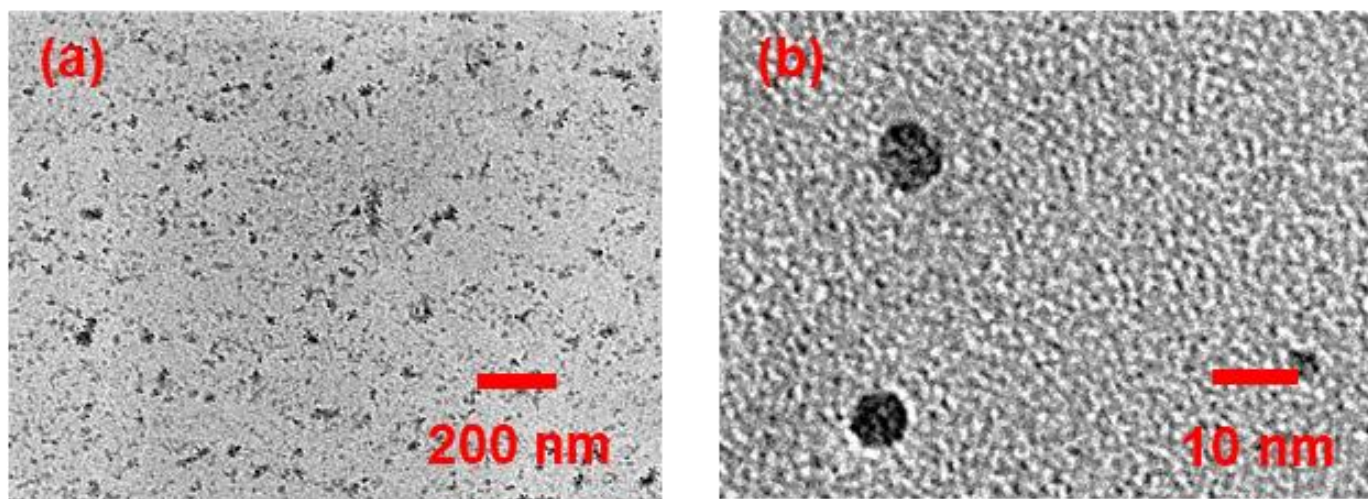


Figure S10. TEM image of lyophilized C₁₂TAB sample in water (2.0 wt%).

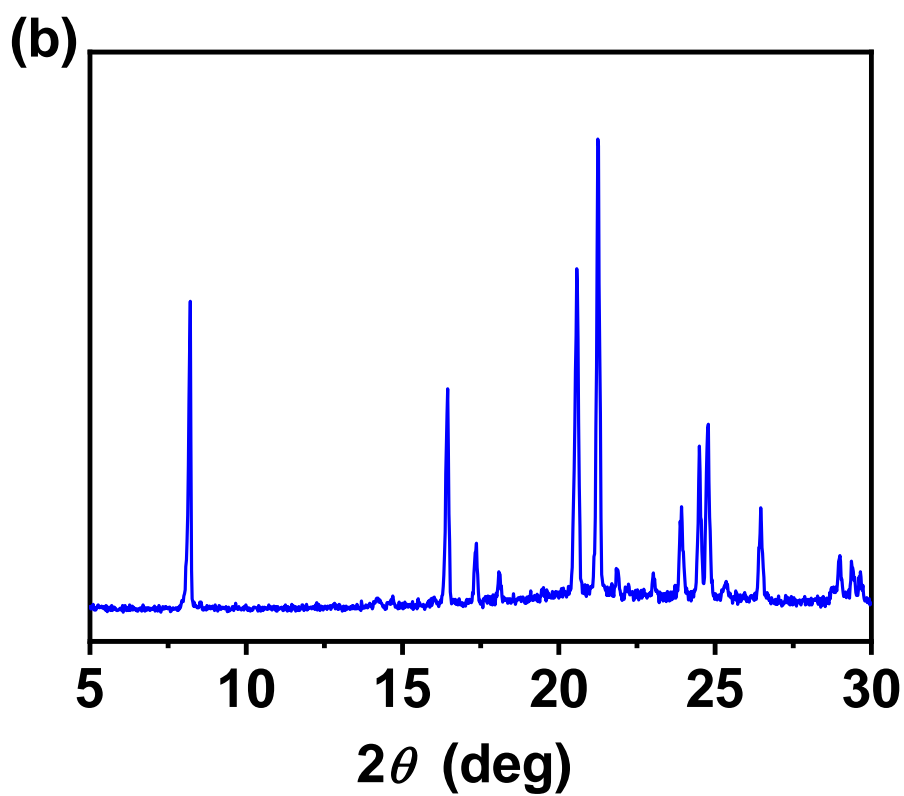


Figure S11. The (a) small-angle and (b) wide-angle XRD patterns of lyophilized C₁₂TAB sample in water (3.0 wt%).

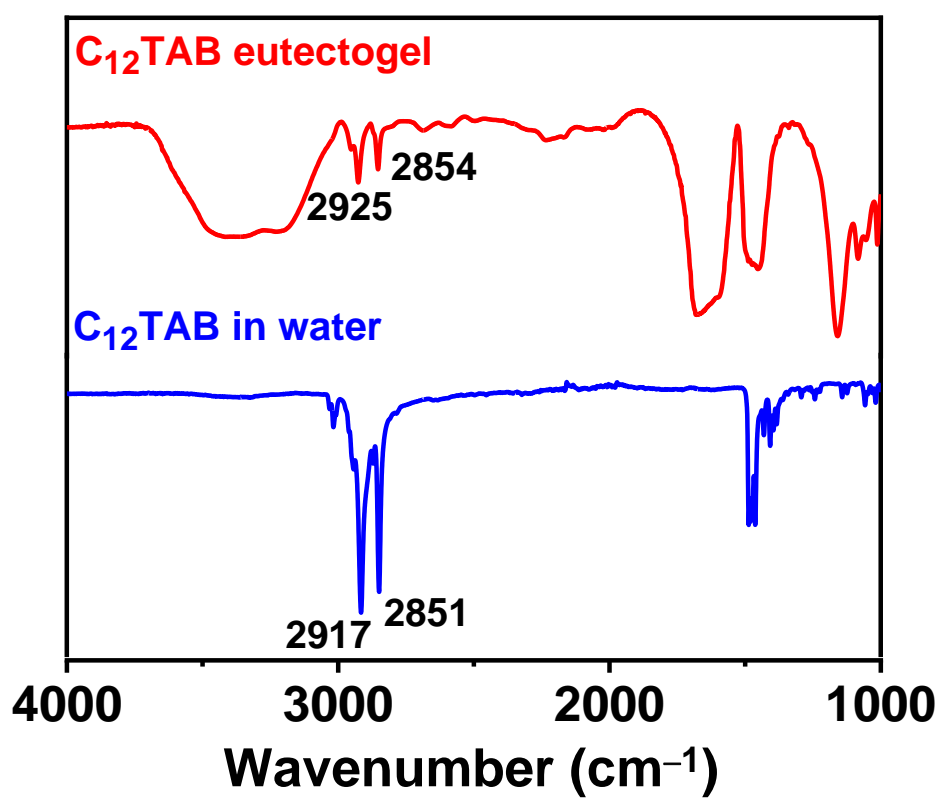


Figure S12. The FT-IR spectra of 3.0 wt% lyophilized C₁₂TAB sample in water and dried C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel.

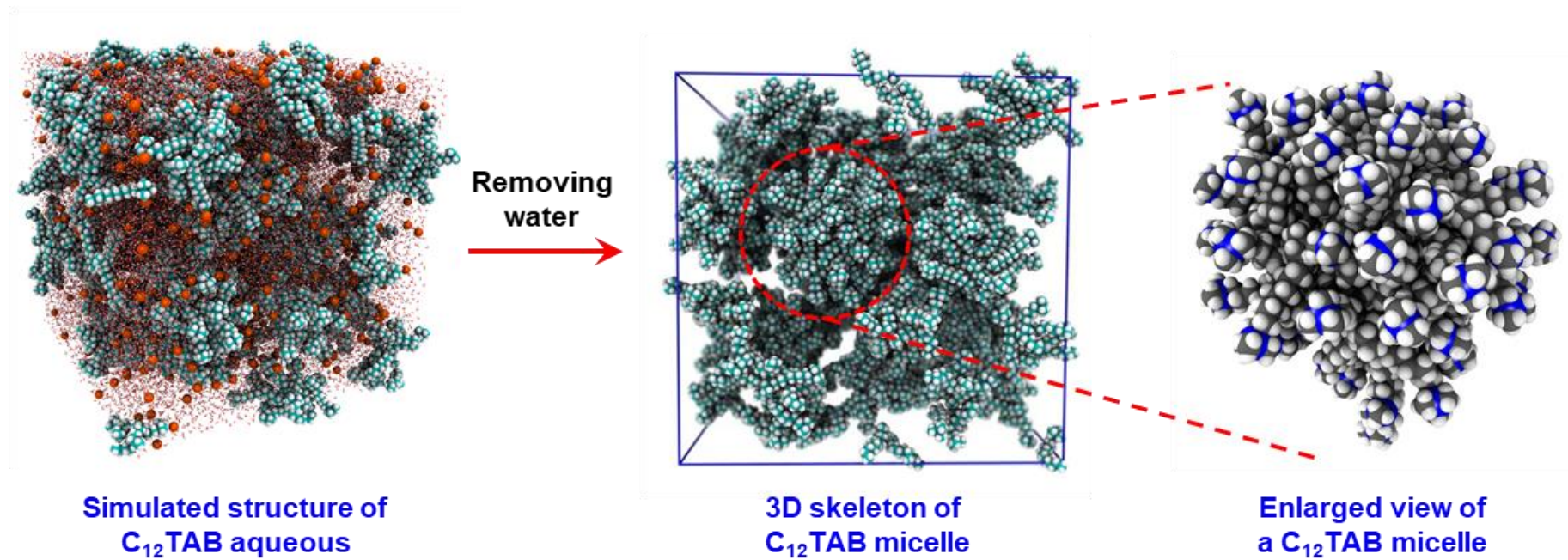


Figure S13. Simulated self-assembly structures of 25.0 wt% $C_{12}TAB$ in water.

Section S3 Adhesion performance of C_n TAB eutectogels

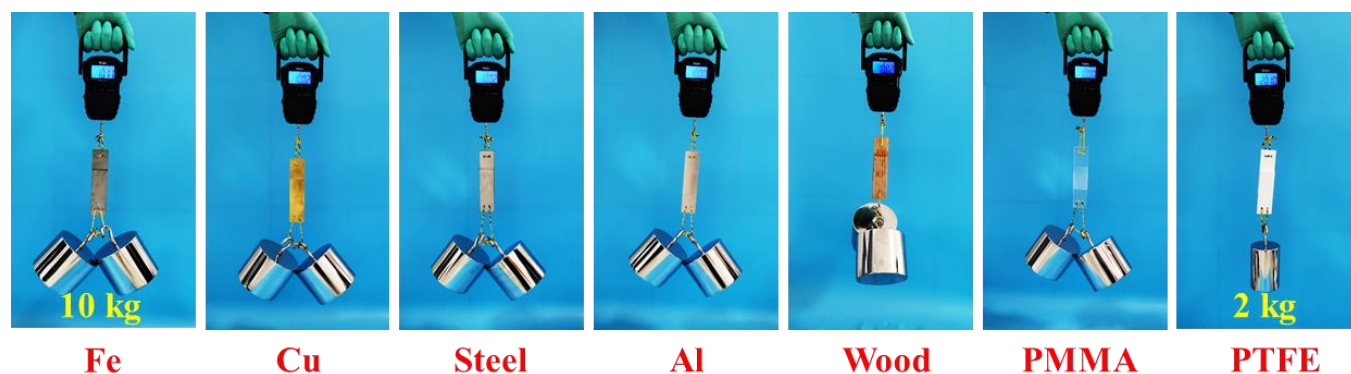


Figure S14. Loading test of 25.0 wt% C_{12} TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhesive to various substrates.

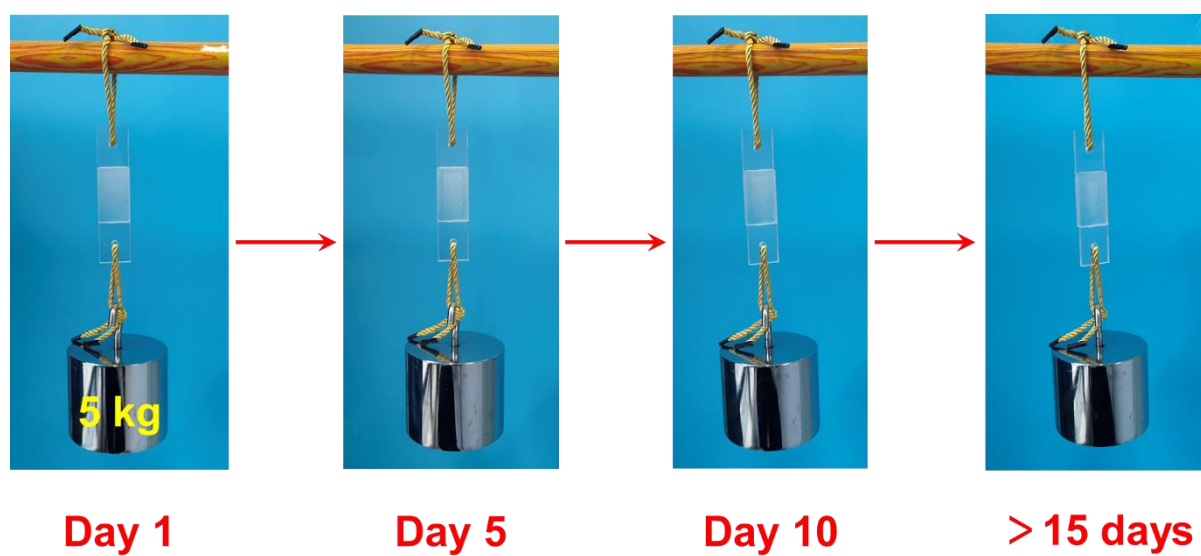


Figure S15. Loading test of long-lasting adhesiveness of 25.0 wt% C_{12} TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhered glass (adhesion area: 3.0 cm \times 5.0 cm). The weight (5 kg) was suspended over 15 days without detaching.

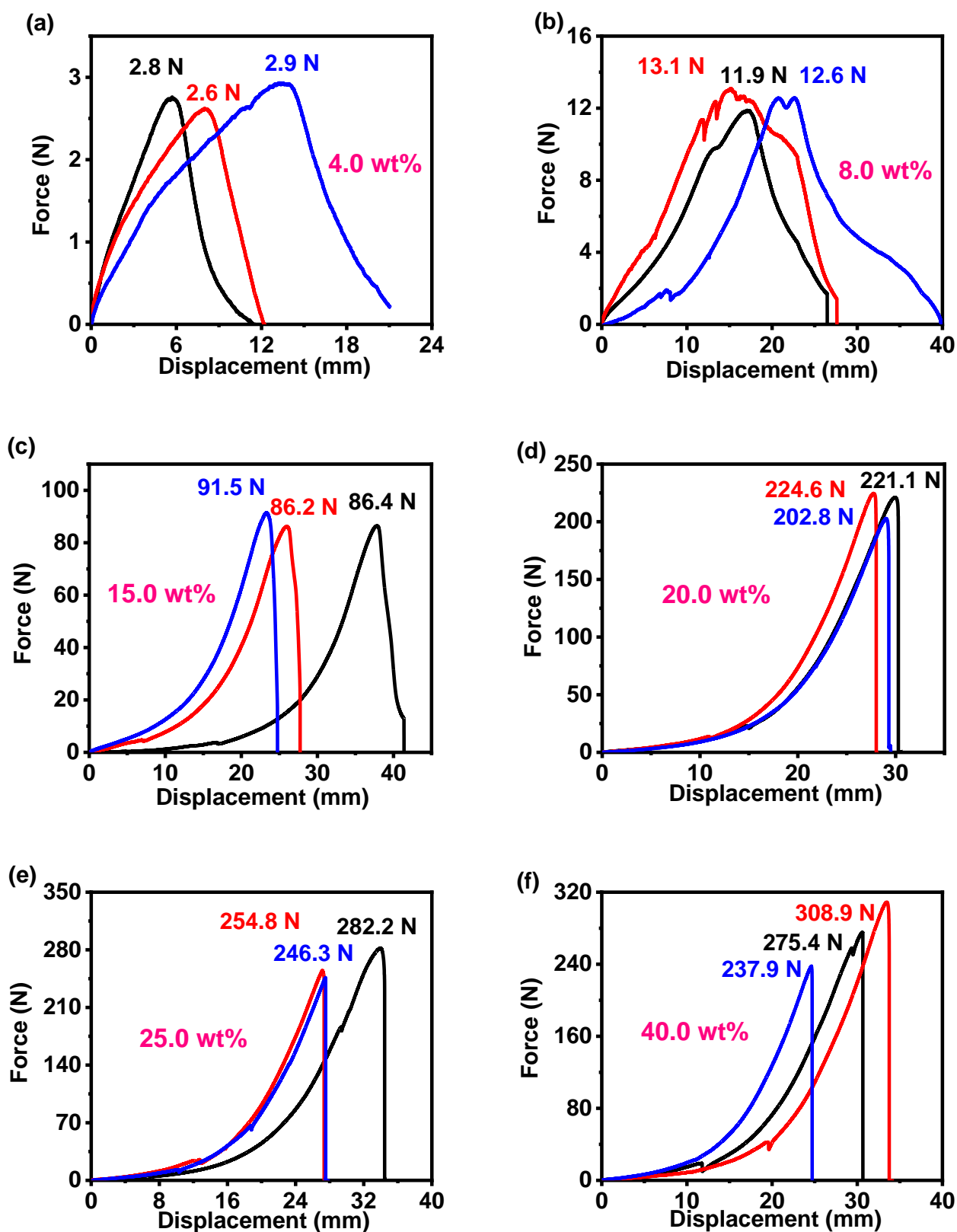


Figure S16. The lap shear test curves of different concentrations of C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhered glass (adhesion area: 2.0 cm × 3.0 cm). Data was collected from at least three separate samples.

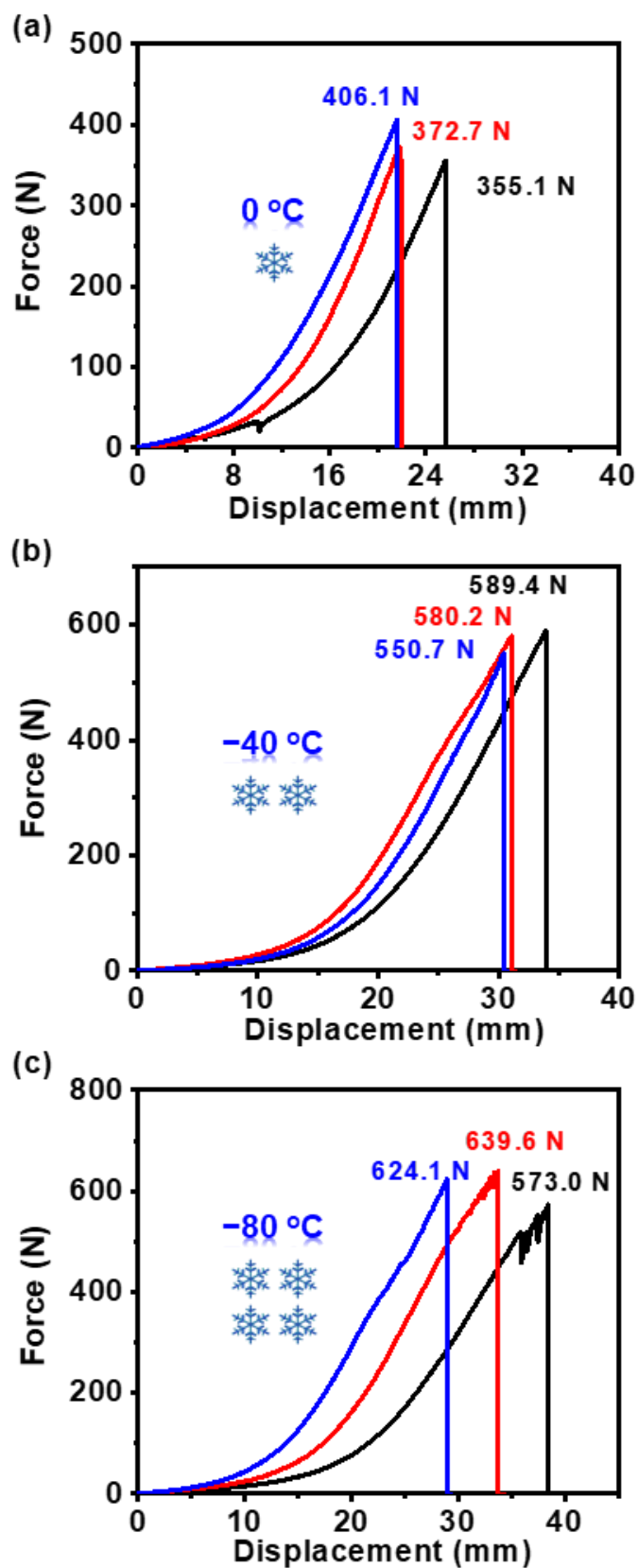


Figure S17. The lap shear test curves of 25.0 wt% $C_{12}TAB/ChCl$ -urea eutectogel adhered glass at different temperatures (adhesion area: 2.0 cm \times 3.0 cm). Data was collected from at least three separate samples.

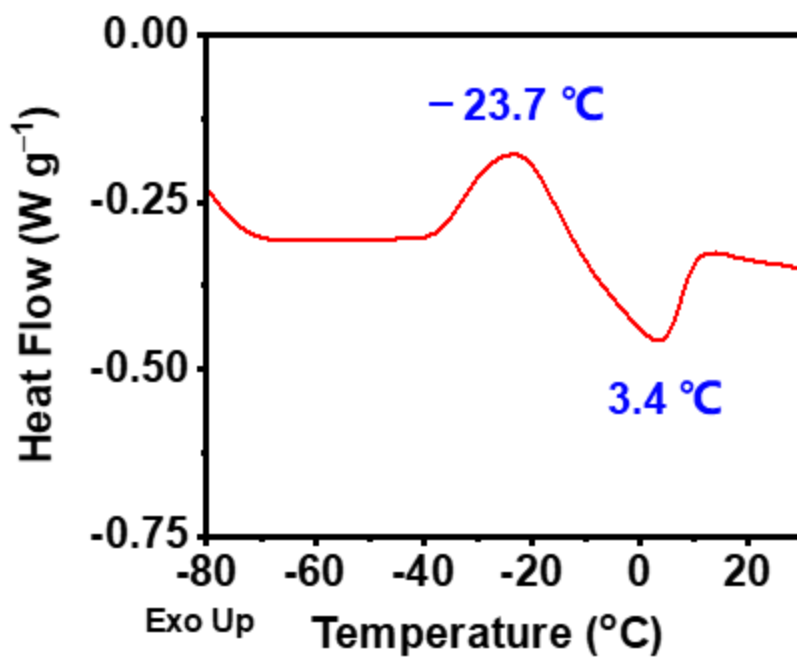


Figure S18. DSC curve of 3.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel.

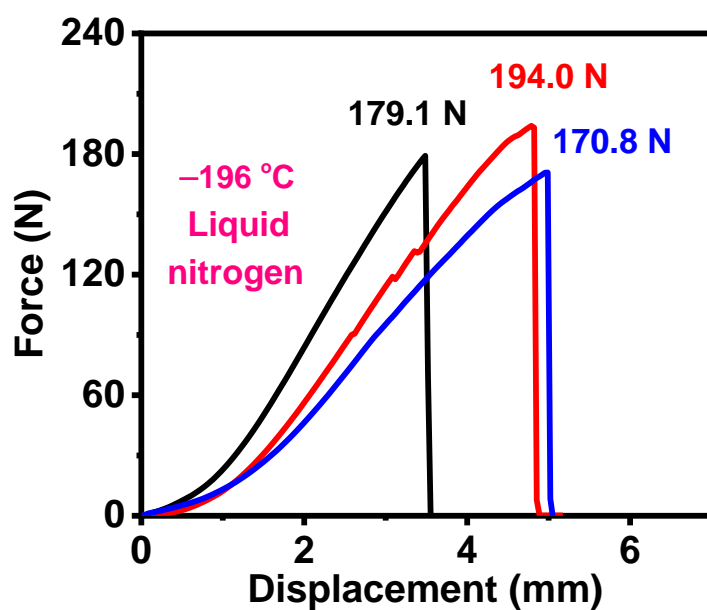


Figure S19. Lap-shear test curve of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhered glass after being immersed in immersed in liquid nitrogen (-196 °C) for over 1 h (adhesion area: 2.0 cm × 3.0 cm). Data was collected from at least three separate samples.

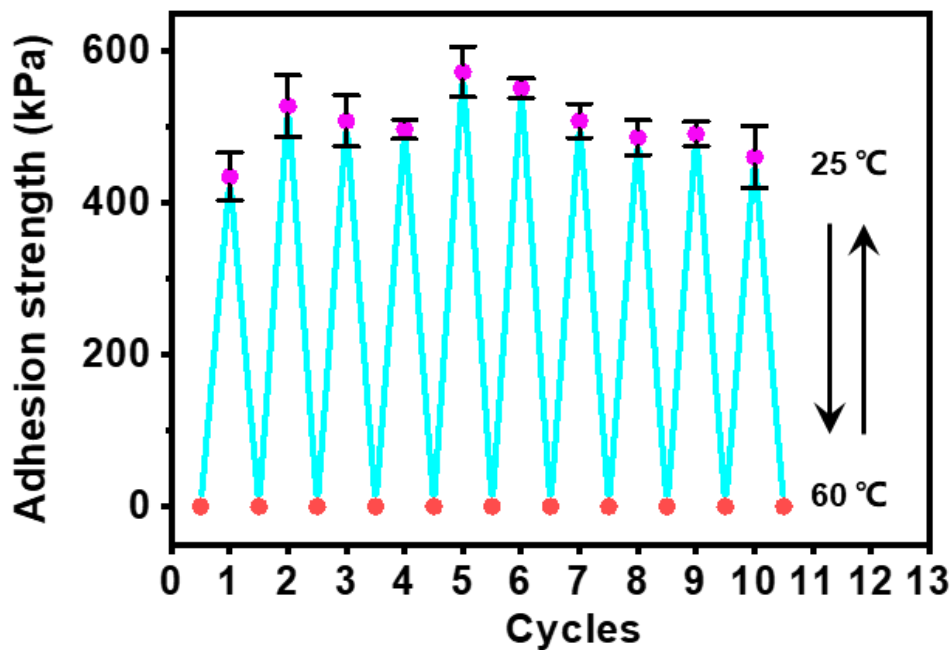


Figure S20. The adhesion strength of the eutectogel after 10 times cycling experiments between 25 and 60 °C

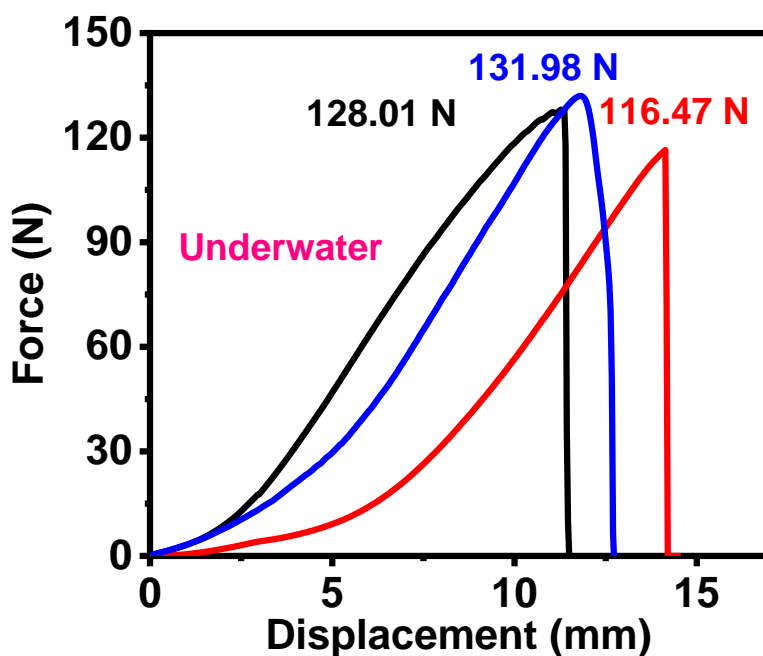
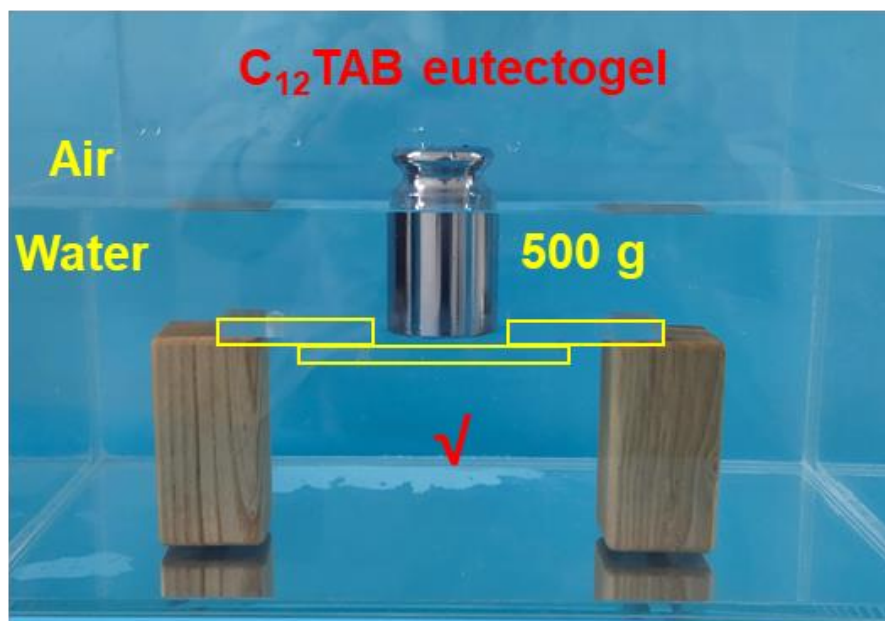


Figure S21. Lap-shear test curve of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhered glass. The samples were *in situ* prepared underwater by pressing ~5 min (adhesion area: 2.0 cm × 3.0 cm). Data were collected from at least three separate samples.

(a)



(b)



Figure S22. Underwater adhesiveness of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel and representative commercial adhesives. Experimental site photos of (a) C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel and (b) 502 super glue (a cyanoacrylate adhesive).

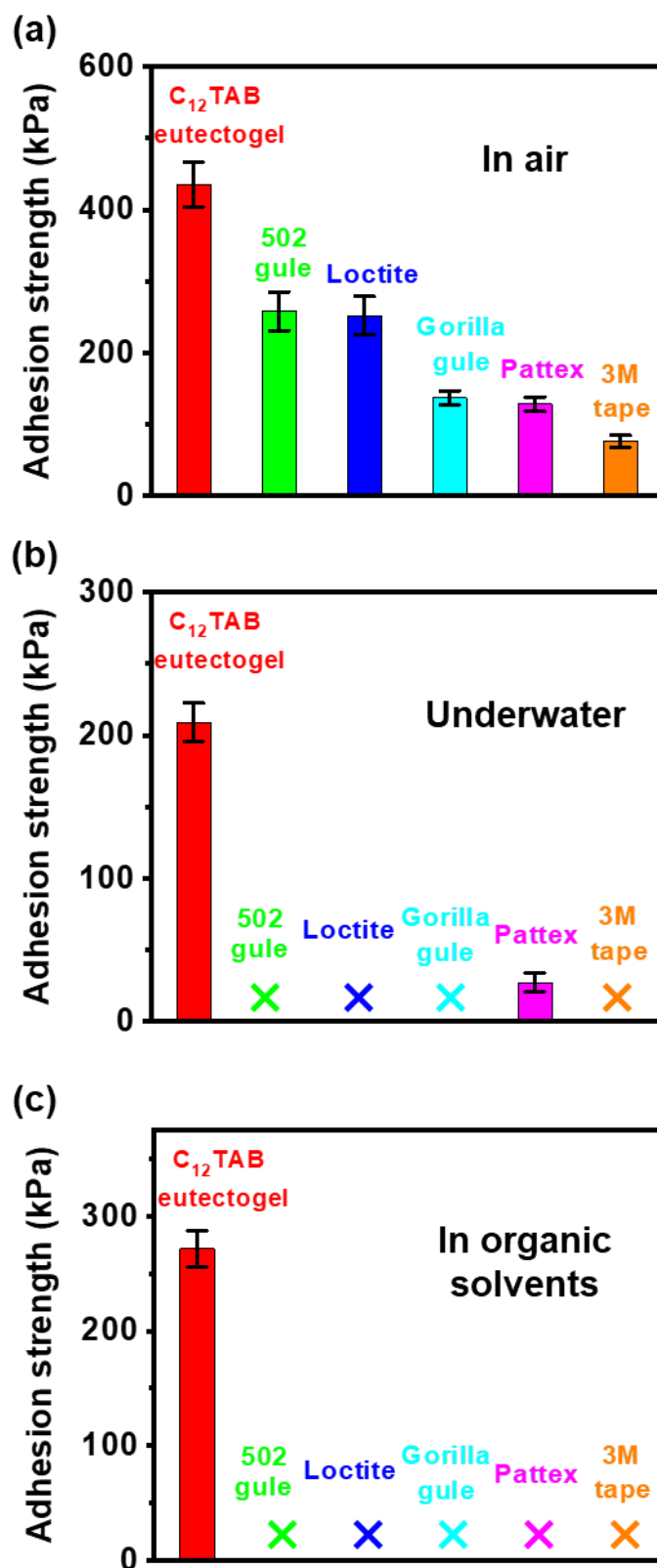


Figure S23. Comparison of the adhesion strength of the C_{12} TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel and commercial adhesives on glass (a) in air, (b) underwater and (c) in organic solvents.

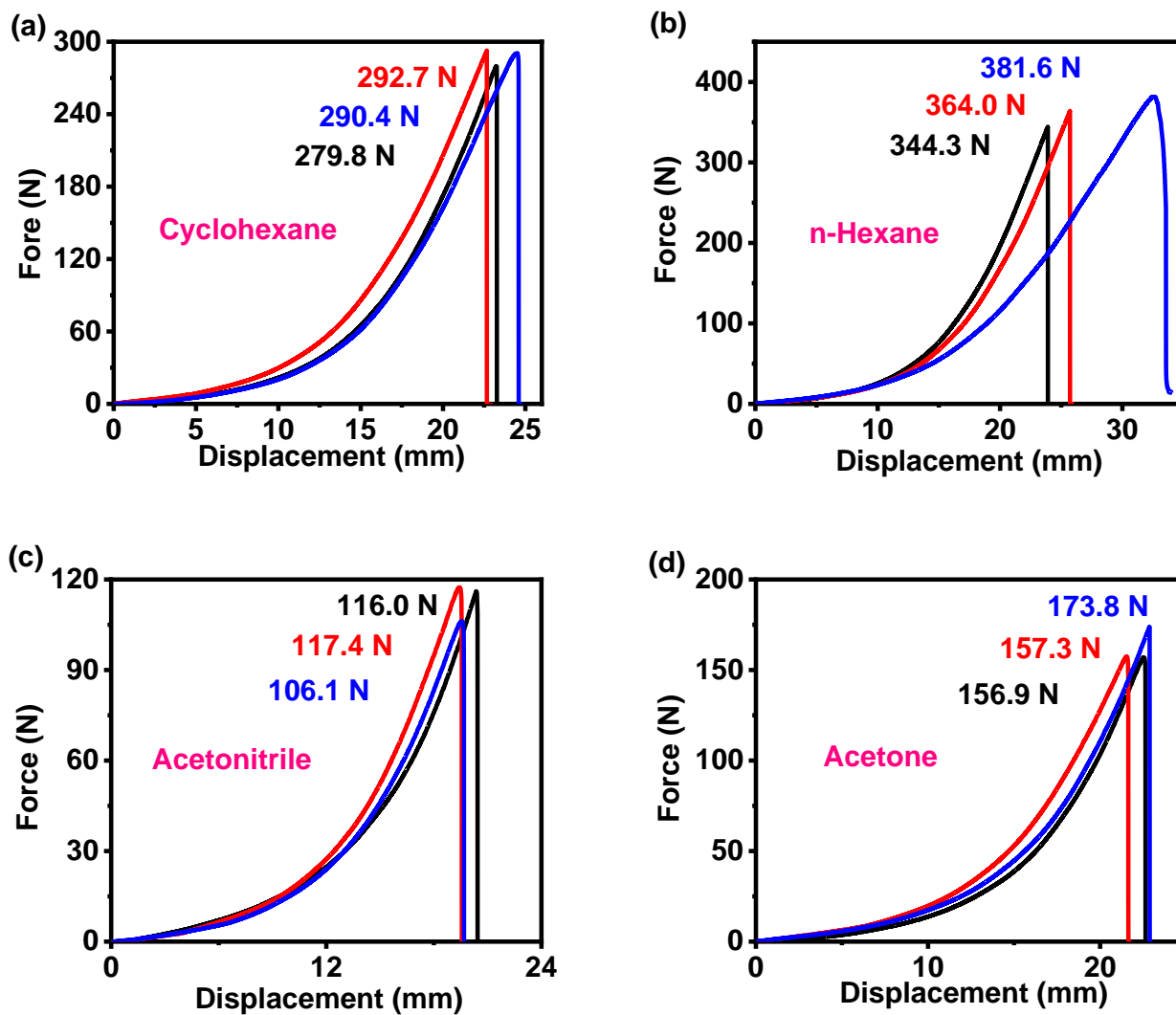


Figure S24. Lap-shear test curve of 25.0 wt% C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogel adhered glass. The samples were *in situ* prepared in organic solvents by pressing ~5 min. Data were collected from at least three separate samples.

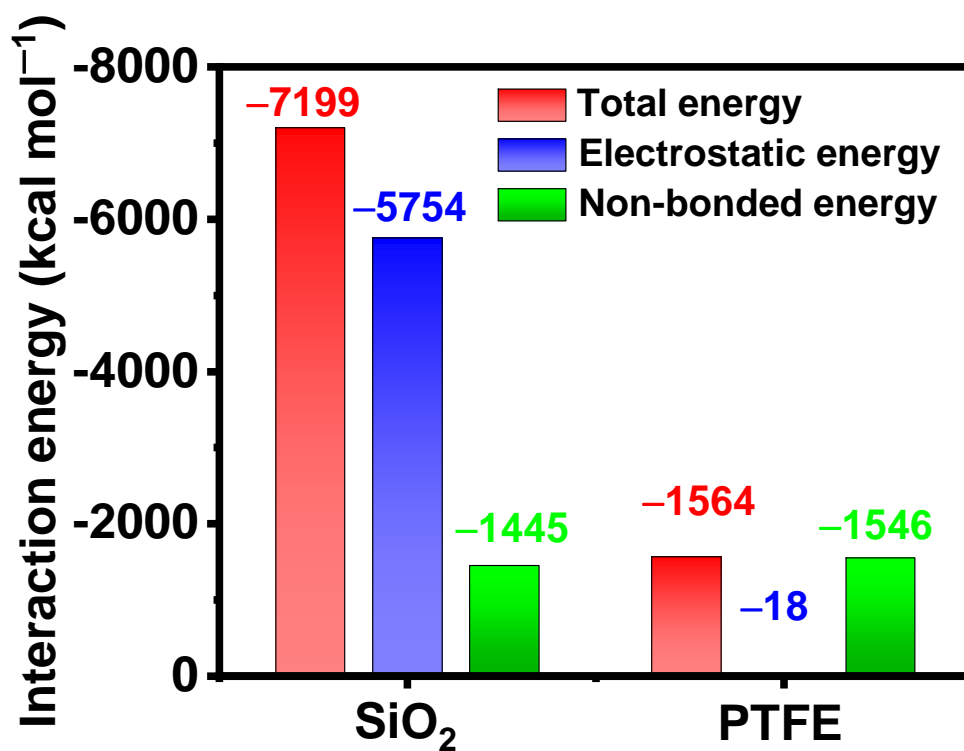


Figure S25. The interfacial binding energies between C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea eutectogels and SiO₂ or PTFE substrates.

Table S2. Comparison for adhesion performance with previously reported low-molecular-weight supramolecular adhesives.

Material	Adhesion strength in air at RT		Ultra-low temperature adhesiveness	Underwater <i>in situ</i> adhesiveness	Organic solvent <i>in situ</i> adhesiveness	Long-term adhesiveness at RT	Ref
	Hydrophilic substrates	Hydrophobic substrates					
C₁₂TAB/ChCl-urea supramolecular eutectogel	Glass (435.1 kPa) Fe (565.3 kPa)	PTFE (76.3 kPa) PMMA (173.7 kPa)	−196 °C (Glass: 299.2 kPa) −80 °C (Glass: 632.5 kPa)	Glass (209.9 kPa)	Cyclohexane (Glass: 479.4 kPa) n-Hexane (Glass: 605.5 kPa)	>15 days	This work
Pt-coordinated benzo-21-crown-7-functionalized pyridine	Glass (273 psi)	PTFE (28 psi)	−20 °C (< 125 psi)	NA	NA	NA	14
Azobenzene derivatives	Al (1.34 MPa)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15
Triply benzo-21-crown-7-substituted 1,3,5-benzenetricarboxamide derivative (TC7 ₁₀ -H ₁)	Glass (602 psi)	NA	−20 °C (293 psi)	NA	NA	More than two and a half years	16
L-histidine/H ₄ SiW ₁₂ O ₄₀ (His/SiW)	Glass (15.8 kPa) Cu (38.3 kPa)	PET (356.4 kPa)	NA	NA	NA	NA	17
3-(2-naphthyl)-L-alanine and H ₆ P ₂ W ₁₈ O ₆₂ (NA/HP ₂ W ₁₈)	NA	NA	NA	Glass (3.78 kPa) Stainless steel (4.33 kPa)	NA	NA	18

Continued

Material	Adhesion strength in air at RT		Ultra-low temperature adhesiveness	Underwater <i>in situ</i> adhesiveness	Organic solvent <i>in situ</i> adhesiveness	Long-term adhesiveness at RT	Ref
	Hydrophilic substrates	Hydrophobic substrates					
Cyclodextrin-acid-based DESPs	Glass (4.38 MPa)	PTFE (0.48 MPa)	-80 °C (PMMA: 1.30 MPa)	NA	Dichloromethane ^a (Glass: 2.84 MPa)	over 90 days	19
	Fe (6.57 MPa)	PMMA (1.68 MPa)					
Penta-Substituted cyanostar macrocycle/diphosphate monomer	Glass (1.6 MPa)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20
Pillar[5]arene-crown ether (PC)-water copolymer (PC ₁₀ -W ₁)	Glass (4.01 MPa)	PTFE (0.09 MPa)	-80 °C (Steel: 1.25 MPa)	NA	NA	90 days at -50 °C	21
	Steel (4.28 MPa)	PMMA (0.46 MPa)	-196 °C (Steel: 1.17 MPa)				
Arylazoisoxazoles derivatives	Glass (bearing 0.840 kg load)	Teflon (bearing 1.1 kg load)	NA	NA	NA	3 days	22
	Al (bearing 3.7 kg load)	PMMA (bearing 3.8 kg load)					
Crown ether-Pt supramolecule (CPS)	Glass (1.52 MPa)	NA	NA	NA	NA	180 days	23
	Al (1.43 MPa)						
Dibenzo-24-crown-8 with four-armed pentaerythritol (P1)	Glass (2.017 MPa)	PTFE (0.277 MPa)	-18 °C (Wood: 0.967 MPa)	Glass (1.562 MPa)	NA	> 24 months	24
	Wood (1.698 MPa)	PMMA (0.790 MPa)					

a: Organic solvent resistant adhesiveness, not *in situ* adhesiveness.

Section S4 References

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