

Supporting Information

**I<sub>2</sub>/TBPB mediated oxidative reaction of aryl acetaldehydes with  
amidines: synthesis of 1,2,5-triaryl-1H-imidazoles**

Jing Wang<sup>a</sup>, Fang-Dong Zhang<sup>a</sup>, Dong Tang<sup>b</sup>, Ping Wu<sup>a</sup>, Xue-Guo Zhang<sup>a</sup>, and Bao-Hua Chen<sup>\*a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> State Key Laboratory of Applied Organic Chemistry, Lanzhou University, Gansu Lanzhou, 730000, P. R. China, and Key Laboratory of Nonferrous Metal Chemistry and Resources Utilization of Gansu Province, Lanzhou, 730000, P. R. China

Fax: (+86)931-8912582 E-mail: chbh@lzu.edu.cn

<sup>b</sup> Department of Chemistry, Lishui University, Lishui 323000, P. R. China

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### 1. General Remarks.

<sup>1</sup>H NMR and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were determined on 300 MHz and 75 MHz in CDCl<sub>3</sub>. unknown products were further characterized by HRMS (TOF-ESI), the melting points of solid products were determined on a microscopic apparatus.

### 2. General experimental procedure.

Typical procedure for the synthesis of **3aa**.

All reactions were performed on a scale relative to 1,2,5-triaryl-1H-imidazoles. The N-phenylbenzimidamide **1a** (0.20 mmol) , phenylacetaldehyde **2a** (0.24 mmol), I<sub>2</sub> (20 mol%), TBPB (1eq) and dioxane (2 mL) were successfully mixed in the flask using a magnetic stir bar and reacted at 100 °C for 5 h in the presence of air. Then the mixture was removed from the oil bath and cooled to room temperature. The mixture was filtered and washed with ethyl acetate (3×50 mL) and the crude product was obtained by concentrating under reduced pressure. Finally, product **3aa** was isolated as a white solid by silica gel chromatography (petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 2/1 as the eluent). The remaining substituted imidazoles were prepared in a similar manner. The structures of the products (**3aa**<sup>1</sup>,**3ac**<sup>1</sup>,**3ah**<sup>2</sup>,**3ha**<sup>3</sup>) were identified according to the literature.

### 3. References

1. A. R. Katritzky, L. Zhu, H. Lang, O. Denisko and Z. Wang, *Tetrahedron*, 1995, **51**, 13271-13276.
2. S. Auricchio, A. M. Truscello, M. Lauria and S. V. Meille, *Tetrahedron*, 2012, **68**, 7441-7449.
3. M. Zibinsky and V. V. Fokin, *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. Engl.*, 2013, **52**, 1507-1510.

### 3.Characterization data of 1,2,5-trisubstitued imidazoles

1,2,5-triphenyl-1H-imidazole(**3aa**):0.2 mmol, 55mg, 93%;white solid; mp249-252°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.40 – 7.29 (m, 6H), 7.27 – 7.19 (m, 6H), 7.11 (d, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 4H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO) δ 148.2, 137.4, 135.2, 130.8, 130.0, 129.6, 129.0, 128.6, 128.44, 128.41, 128.3, 128.2, 127.5. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>17</sub>N<sub>3</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 297.1387, found 297.1389.

2-(4-methoxyphenyl)-1,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole(**3ba**): 0.2 mmol, 53mg, 81%;white solid; mp 206-210°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.39 – 7.16 (m, 9H), 7.08 (dd, *J* = 10.8, 6.9 Hz, 4H), 6.75 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 3.77 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 159.5, 147.9, 137.2, 134.6, 130.1, 129.8, 129.3, 128.4, 128.35, 128.3, 128.2, 127.7, 127.2, 123.0, 113.5, 55.1. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 327.1492, found 327.1491.

1,5-diphenyl-2-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole(**3ca**):0.2 mmol, 53mg, 85%;white solid; mp198-202 °C;<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.35 (t, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 3H), 7.27 – 7.18 (m, 6H), 7.14 – 7.01 (m, 6H), 2.30 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.0, 137.9, 137.2, 134.7, 130.7, 129.8, 129.2, 128.6, 128.5,128.3,128.2, 128.1, 127.9,127.6, 127.1, 21.1. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1545.

1,5-diphenyl-2-(4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)-1H-imidazole (**3da**): 0.2 mmol, 57mg, 78%;white solid; mp158-162 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.55 – 7.32 (m, 8H), 7.22 (s, 3H), 7.12 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 4H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 146.3, 136.8, 135.8, 134.0, 130.0, 129.6, 129.55, 129.4, 128.9,128.7,128.6, 128.5, 128.3,128.1, 127.6, 125.0 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 3 Hz).HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>16</sub>F<sub>3</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 365.1260, found 365.1264.

2-(2-chlorophenyl)-1,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole(**3ea**): 0.2 mmol, 52mg, 79%;white solid; mp126-128 °C;<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.41 (s, 1H), 7.37 – 7.15 (m, 10H), 7.12 (dd, *J* = 6.8, 3.0 Hz, 2H), 7.02 (dd, *J* = 7.7, 1.8 Hz, 2H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 146.4, 136.7, 135.0, 134.3, 133.0, 130.9, 130.6, 130.0, 129.7, 129.1, 128.6, 128.4, 128.3, 128.2, 127.9, 127.6, 126.5. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>16</sub>ClN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 331.1997, found 331.1995.

3-(1,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazol-2-yl)pyridine(**3fa**): 0.2 mmol, 26mg, 44%;white solid; mp209-211 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.59 – 8.45 (m, 2H), 7.67 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.44 – 7.32 (m, 4H), 7.28 – 7.05 (m, 8H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 149.4, 149.0, 145.2, 136.7, 135.8, 129.7, 129.4, 129.1, 128.8,128.7, 128.5,128.3,128.2,127.6,126.8, 122.9. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>3</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup>298.1339, found 298.1341.

1-(4-methoxyphenyl)-2,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole(**3ga**):0.2 mmol, 62mg, 95%;white solid; mp202-205°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.41 – 7.33 (m, 3H), 7.29 – 7.20 (m, 6H), 7.10 (dd, *J* = 6.9, 2.8 Hz, 2H), 7.03 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 6.84 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 3.82 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 159.6, 148.0, 135.4, 132.8, 130.1, 129.7, 129.4, 129.1, 128.7, 128.6,128.5, 128.3,127.6, 127.2,114.7, 55.6. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 327.1492, found 327.1490.

2,5-diphenyl-1-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3ha**):0.2 mmol, 57mg, 92%;white solid; mp218-222°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.36 (d, *J* = 5.3 Hz, 3H), 7.27 – 7.20 (m, 6H), 7.11 (dd, *J* = 11.4, 6.0 Hz, 4H), 6.98 (d, *J*

= 8.2 Hz, 2H), 2.38 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.9, 138.8, 135.2, 134.4, 130.2, 130.1, 129.8, 129.1, 128.7, 128.6, 128.4, 128.3, 128.1, 127.6, 127.3, 21.4. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1540.

2,5-diphenyl-1-(o-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3ia**): 0.2 mmol, 56mg, 90%; white solid; mp 148-150°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.42 (s, 1H), 7.39 – 7.28 (m, 3H), 7.26 – 7.14 (m, 9H), 7.07 (dd, *J* = 6.6, 3.0 Hz, 2H), 1.84 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.1, 136.7, 136.3, 135.2, 131.6, 131.0, 130.2, 129.5, 129.4, 128.6, 128.5, 128.4, 128.38, 128.2, 127.8, 127.5, 127.3, 17.8. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1542.

1-(3,4-dimethylphenyl)-2,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ja**): 0.2 mmol, 60mg, 91%; white solid; mp 216-220°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.41 – 7.32 (m, 3H), 7.26 – 7.16 (m, 6H), 7.08 (dd, *J* = 12.0, 5.5 Hz, 3H), 6.84 (d, *J* = 10.4 Hz, 2H), 2.26 (s, 3H), 2.14 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.2, 138.0, 137.3, 135.3, 135.0, 131.0, 130.6, 130.2, 129.2, 128.8, 128.5, 128.3, 128.2, 127.3, 125.7, 19.9, 19.7. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 325.1700, found 325.1702.

1-(2-ethylphenyl)-2,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ka**): 0.2 mmol, 56mg, 86%; white solid; mp 123-125°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.46 – 7.33 (m, 4H), 7.31 – 7.15 (m, 9H), 7.11 – 7.04 (m, 2H), 2.16 (q, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 0.84 (td, *J* = 7.6, 1.1 Hz, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.2, 141.6, 136.1, 135.4, 131.0, 130.2, 129.7, 129.6, 129.5, 128.5, 128.4, 128.37, 128.3, 128.2, 128.0, 127.5, 127.1, 23.5, 13.3. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 325.1700, found 325.1697.

1-(4-fluorophenyl)-2,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3la**): 0.2 mmol, 54mg, 86%; white solid; mp 221-226°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.37 – 7.21 (m, 9H), 7.06 (dd, *J* = 11.9, 6.7 Hz, 6H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 161.9 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 247.5), 147.9, 134.92 (s), 133.1, 130.2, 129.8, 129.7, 129.4, 128.6, 128.4, 128.2, 128.1, 128.0, 127.3, 116.3 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 22.5). HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>16</sub>FN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 315.1292, found 315.1290.

1-(4-chlorophenyl)-2,5-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ma**): 0.2 mmol, 59mg, 89%; white solid; mp 214-218°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.30 (ddd, *J* = 20.6, 10.3, 6.3 Hz, 11H), 7.12 – 6.96 (m, 4H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.2, 135.9, 135.2, 134.7, 130.4, 129.9, 129.7, 129.1, 128.8, 128.7, 128.6, 128.5, 127.8. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>16</sub>ClN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 331.0997, found 331.0998.

2-(4-methoxyphenyl)-5-phenyl-1-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3na**): 0.2 mmol, 63mg, 92%; white solid; mp 182-186°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.33 – 7.18 (m, 6H), 7.16 – 7.05 (m, 4H), 6.98 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 6.76 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 3.77 (s, 3H), 2.38 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 159.4, 148.0, 138.4, 134.7, 130.9, 130.1, 130.0, 128.8, 128.4, 128.2, 128.0, 127.8, 127.1, 123.3, 113.4, 55.1, 21.2. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 341.1649, found 341.1650.

5-phenyl-1,2-di-p-tolyl-1H-imidazole (**3oa**): 0.2 mmol, 59mg, 91%; white solid; mp 192-196°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.33 (s, 1H), 7.27 – 7.18 (m, 5H), 7.15 – 6.95 (m, 8H), 2.37 (s, 3H), 2.30 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.4, 138.6, 138.2, 135.1, 134.9, 130.3, 130.2, 129.0, 128.9, 128.6, 128.4, 128.3, 128.2, 128.1, 127.4, 21.5. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 325.1700, found 325.1701.

2-(3-bromo-4-methylphenyl)-5-phenyl-1-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3pa**):0.2 mmol, 63mg, 78%;white solid; mp210-212°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.66 (s, 1H), 7.33 (s, 1H), 7.27 – 7.14 (m, 5H), 7.12 – 6.96 (m, 6H), 2.39 (s, 3H), 2.34 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 146.8, 139.0, 138.0, 135.6, 134.6, 132.7, 130.4, 130.3, 130.2, 130.0, 128.6, 128.5, 128.4, 128.2, 127.6, 127.4, 124.8, 22.9, 21.5 HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>20</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 403.0805, found403.0803.

2-(4-chlorophenyl)-5-phenyl-1-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3qa**):0.2 mmol, 52mg, 76%;white solid; mp 193-196°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.36 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 3.0 Hz, 3H), 7.27 – 7.18 (m, 8H), 7.09 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 3.0 Hz, 2H), 6.92 (d, *J* = 2.5 Hz, 2H), 2.27 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 148.0, 139.5, 137.1, 135.1, 130.7, 129.9, 129.3,129.1, 128.7,128.4,128.2, 128.1,128.0, 127.3, 125.4, 21.3. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>18</sub>ClN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 345.1153, found 345.1155.

2-(4-bromophenyl)-5-phenyl-1-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3ra**):0.2 mmol, 56mg, 72%;white solid; mp 174-178°C;<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.40 – 7.32 (m, 3H), 7.27 – 7.06 (m, 9H), 6.97 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 2.38 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.1, 139.0, 135.7, 134.5, 131.5, 130.4, 130.3, 129.9, 129.8, 128.7,128.5,128.4, 128.1, 127.6, 122.7, 21.5. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>18</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 389.0648, found 389.0651.

5-(4-methoxyphenyl)-1,2-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ab**):0.2 mmol, 55mg, 85%;white solid; mp 168-172 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.30 (dd, *J* = 22.8, 12.2 Hz, 9H), 7.09 (dd, *J* = 7.7, 1.8 Hz, 2H), 7.00 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 2H), 6.75 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 3.76 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO) δ 159.3, 147.9, 137.6, 135.3, 131.0, 130.2, 129.7, 129.1, 128.8, 128.7, 128.4, 127.9, 122.6, 114.1, 55.6. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 327.1492, found 327.1491.

1,2-diphenyl-5-(p-tolyl)-1H-imidazole(**3ac**):0.2 mmol, 51mg, 83%;white solid; mp217-220°C;<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.39 – 7.31 (m, 6H), 7.27 – 7.22 (m, 3H), 7.11 (dd, *J* = 7.9, 1.7 Hz, 2H), 7.00 (dd, *J* = 20.4, 8.2 Hz, 4H), 2.30 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.8, 137.3, 137.2, 135.2, 130.9, 129.4, 129.0, 128.8,128.5,128.4,128.3, 128.1, 128.0, 127.9,126.9, 21.2. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1542.

1,2-diphenyl-5-(m-tolyl)-1H-imidazole(**3ad**):0.2 mmol, 50mg, 81%;white solid; mp180-184°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.34 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H), 7.24 (t, *J* = 5.9 Hz, 3H), 7.15 – 6.94 (m, 5H), 6.80 (d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 2.24 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.9, 137.8, 137.2, 135.1,130.6, 129.6,129.3,129.2, 128.7,128.4,128.2,128.1,128.03, 128.0,125.4, 21.3. HRMS (ESI)calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1541.

1,2-diphenyl-5-(o-tolyl)-1H-imidazole (**3ae**): 0.2 mmol, 48mg, 78%;white solid; mp119-123°C;<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.41 – 7.34 (m, 2H), 7.29 – 7.04 (m, 11H), 6.97 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 2.12 (s, 3H).<sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.2, 138.3, 137.2, 134.1, 131.9, 131.0, 130.8,130.1,129.6, 129.1, 128.8, 128.6, 128.2, 128.1, 127.8, 125.4, 20. 6. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 311.1543, found 311.1545.

5-(3,4-dimethylphenyl)-1,2-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3af**): 0.2 mmol, 52mg, 80%; white solid; mp 188 - 192°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.40 – 7.30 (m, 6H), 7.26 – 7.21 (m, 3H), 7.14 – 7.08 (m, 2H), 6.95 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 6.71 (d, *J* = 9.4 Hz, 1H), 2.20 (s, 3H), 2.15 (s, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.6, 137.3, 136.4, 135.8, 135.2, 130.6, 129.6, 129.4, 129.2, 128.7, 128.3, 128.2, 128.0, 127.9, 127.7, 125.7, 19.6, 19.4. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 325.1700, found 325.1702.

5-(4-ethylphenyl)-1,2-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ag**): 0.2 mmol, 52mg, 81%; white solid; mp 269-272°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.34 (d, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 6H), 7.22 (d, *J* = 6.1 Hz, 3H), 7.14 – 6.96 (m, 6H), 2.59 (q, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 1.19 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 3H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO) δ 147.7, 143.3, 137.2, 135.1, 130.6, 129.3, 128.7, 128.4, 128.3, 128.2, 128.0, 127.9, 127.7, 127.0, 28.4, 15.2. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 325.1700, found 325.1698.

5-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,2-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ah**): 0.2 mmol, 49mg, 78%; white solid; mp 228-232°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.30 (td, *J* = 11.4, 6.9 Hz, 9H), 7.12 – 7.00 (m, 4H), 6.92 (t, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 2H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 162.3 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 245.3 Hz), 148.2, 137.2, 134.4, 130.7, 130.5 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 8.3 Hz), 130.1, 129.7, 129.0, 128.9, 128.7, 128.5, 128.3, 126.1, 115.6 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 21.0 Hz). HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>16</sub>FN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 315.1292, found 315.1294.

5-(2-fluorophenyl)-1,2-diphenyl-1H-imidazole (**3ai**): 0.2 mmol, 45mg, 72%; white solid; mp 198-201°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.30 (ddd, *J* = 16.1, 11.4, 8.4 Hz, 10H), 7.12 – 6.93 (m, 5H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 160.1 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 246.8 Hz), 148.2, 137.2, 131.9, 131.85, 131.0, 130.6, 130.1, 130.0, 129.3, 128.9, 128.5, 128.4, 128.2, 127.9, 123.9 (d, *J* = 3.8 Hz), 115.8 (*J*<sub>C-F</sub> = 21.8 Hz). HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>16</sub>FN<sub>2</sub> (M + H)<sup>+</sup> 315.1292, found 315.1291

#### 4. <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of the products

























































