

## Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)

### **The self-assembly of hetero-nuclear complex monitored with ESI-MS and fluorescence spectrophotometry**

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**Table S1.** Details on crystal data collection and structure refinement.

| Complex                                  | <b>Ag-CDO</b>                                   | <b>Tb-Ag-CDO</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Formula                                  | C <sub>7</sub> H <sub>5</sub> O <sub>7</sub> Ag | C <sub>21</sub> H <sub>24</sub> O <sub>27</sub> Ag <sub>3</sub> Tb |
| Fw                                       | 308.98  | 1190.93  |
| Cryst size, mm                           | 0.20 x 0.14 x 0.12                              | 0.20 x 0.16 x 0.10   |
| Temp, K                                  | 113(2)  | 113(2)   |
| Cryst syst                               | Monoclinic                                      | Triclinic  |
| Space group                              | <i>P21/c</i>                                    | <i>P-1</i>   |
| <i>a</i> , Å                             | 15.670(9)                                       | 8.740(2)   |
| <i>b</i> , Å                             | 3.5182(18)                                      | 11.111(2)  |
| <i>c</i> , Å                             | 15.036(8)                                       | 16.820(3)  |
| <i>α</i> , deg                           | 90  | 101.261(3)   |
| <i>β</i> , deg                           | 104.523(7)                                      | 104.482(3)   |
| <i>γ</i> , deg                           | 90  | 98.162(3)  |
| <i>V</i> , Å <sup>3</sup>                | 747.9(4)  | 1519.6(5)  |
| <i>Z</i>                                 | 4   | 2  |
| <i>D<sub>c</sub></i> , g/cm <sup>3</sup> | 2.558   | 2.603  |
| <i>μ</i> , mm <sup>-1</sup>              | 2.528   | 4.319  |
| no. of data/param                        | 1901 / 136                                      | 7150 / 466   |
| obs reflns                               | 8303  | 9313   |
| <i>θ</i> range, deg                      | 2.69-27.88                                      | 1.91-25.02   |
| <i>F</i> (000)                           | 600   | 1144   |
| R <sub>int</sub>                         | 0.0391  | 0.0391   |
| R1 [ <i>I</i> > 2 $\sigma$ ( <i>I</i> )] | 0.0260  | 0.0387   |
| wR2 (all data)                           | 0.0626  | 0.0909   |
| max/min, e Å <sup>-3</sup>               | 0.785 / -1.078                                  | 1.498 / -0.961   |

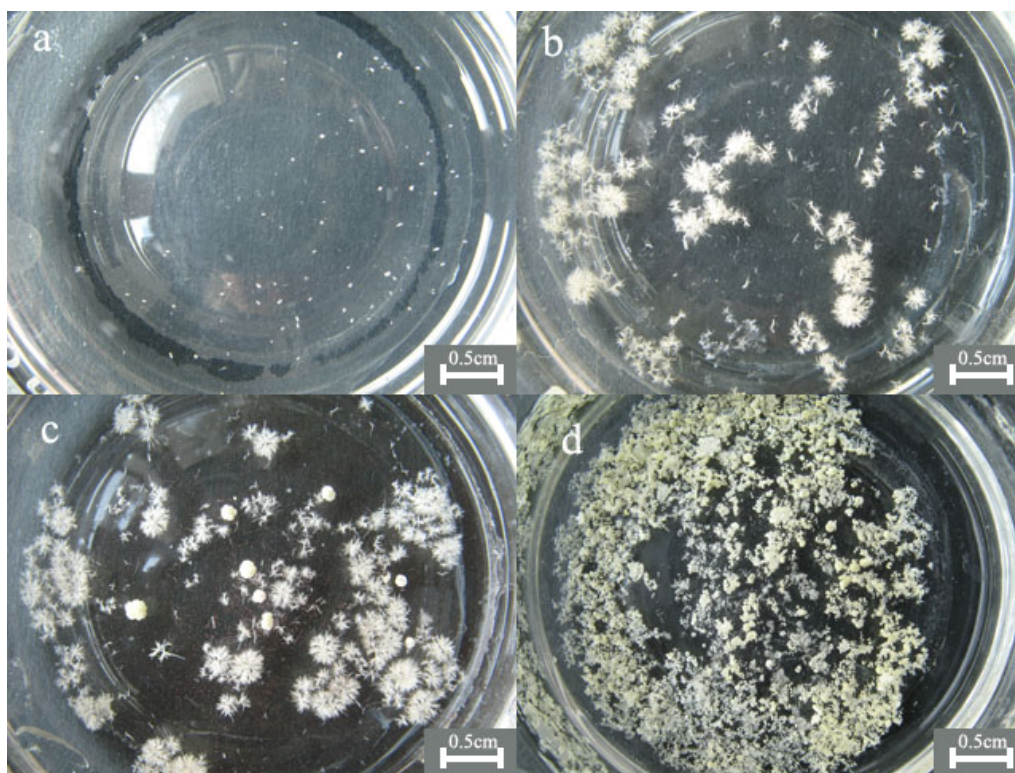
**Table S2.** Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg) for **Ag-CDO** and **Tb-Ag-CDO**.

| Complex <b>Ag-CDO</b>    |            |                     |            |
|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| Ag(1)-O(6)#1             | 2.298(2)   | O(6)#1-Ag(1)-O(7)   | 111.09(8)  |
| Ag(1)-O(5)#2             | 2.339(2)   | O(5)#2-Ag(1)-O(7)   | 71.16(8)   |
| Ag(1)-O(7)#3             | 2.488(2)   | O(7)#3-Ag(1)-O(7)   | 89.86(8)   |
| Ag(1)-O(7)               | 2.494(2)   | O(6)#1-Ag(1)-O(5)   | 112.41(7)  |
| Ag(1)-Ag(1)#4            | 2.9901(15) | O(5)#2-Ag(1)-O(5)   | 89.28(8)   |
| Ag(1)-Ag(1)#3            | 3.5182(18) | O(7)#3-Ag(1)-O(5)   | 66.23(8)   |
| Ag(1)-Ag(1)#2            | 3.5182(18) | O(7)-Ag(1)-O(5)     | 130.69(8)  |
| O(6)#1-Ag(1)-O(5)#2      | 140.20(7)  | Ag(1)#3-O(5)-Ag(1)  | 89.28(8)   |
| O(6)#1-Ag(1)-O(7)#3      | 92.62(8)   | Ag(1)#2-O(7)-Ag(1)  | 89.86(8)   |
| O(5)#2-Ag(1)-O(7)#3      | 127.09(8)  |                     |            |
| Complex <b>Tb-Ag-CDO</b> |            |                     |            |
| Tb(1)-O(5)               | 2.275(5)   | O(5)-Tb(1)-O(8)     | 125.57(18) |
| Tb(1)-O(20)              | 2.290(5)   | O(20)-Tb(1)-O(8)    | 79.68(18)  |
| Tb(1)-O(22)              | 2.322(5)   | O(22)-Tb(1)-O(8)    | 72.04(18)  |
| Tb(1)-O(24)              | 2.328(5)   | O(24)-Tb(1)-O(8)    | 76.22(19)  |
| Tb(1)-O(8)               | 2.337(5)   | O(5)-Tb(1)-O(19)    | 74.7(2)    |
| Tb(1)-O(19)              | 2.350(5)   | O(20)-Tb(1)-O(19)   | 114.0(2)   |
| Tb(1)-O(21)              | 2.360(5)   | O(22)-Tb(1)-O(19)   | 138.5(2)   |
| Tb(1)-O(23)              | 2.366(5)   | O(24)-Tb(1)-O(19)   | 76.0(2)    |
| Ag(1)-O(18)#1            | 2.161(4)   | O(8)-Tb(1)-O(19)    | 73.03(18)  |
| Ag(1)-O(1)               | 2.163(5)   | O(5)-Tb(1)-O(21)    | 74.9(2)    |
| Ag(1)-O(16)              | 2.444(5)   | O(20)-Tb(1)-O(21)   | 138.44(19) |
| Ag(1)-Ag(2)              | 2.8479(16) | O(22)-Tb(1)-O(21)   | 110.4(2)   |
| Ag(1)-Ag(1)#2            | 3.1654(16) | O(24)-Tb(1)-O(21)   | 68.4(2)    |
| Ag(3)-O(12)#3            | 2.207(5)   | O(8)-Tb(1)-O(21)    | 141.76(19) |
| Ag(3)-O(11)#4            | 2.217(5)   | O(19)-Tb(1)-O(21)   | 84.6(2)    |
| Ag(3)-O(4)#5             | 2.390(5)   | O(5)-Tb(1)-O(23)    | 78.87(19)  |
| Ag(3)-Ag(3)#6            | 2.7930(18) | O(20)-Tb(1)-O(23)   | 77.00(18)  |
| Ag(2)-O(17)#1            | 2.199(5)   | O(22)-Tb(1)-O(23)   | 72.13(19)  |
| Ag(2)-O(2)               | 2.217(5)   | O(24)-Tb(1)-O(23)   | 110.81(19) |
| Ag(2)-O(10)#7            | 2.419(5)   | O(8)-Tb(1)-O(23)    | 139.72(18) |
| O(5)-Tb(1)-O(20)         | 75.1(2)    | O(19)-Tb(1)-O(23)   | 146.97(19) |
| O(5)-Tb(1)-O(22)         | 145.68(19) | O(21)-Tb(1)-O(23)   | 69.52(19)  |
| O(20)-Tb(1)-O(22)        | 80.8(2)    | O(18)#1-Ag(1)-O(1)  | 165.6(2)   |
| O(5)-Tb(1)-O(24)         | 134.6(2)   | O(18)#1-Ag(1)-O(16) | 108.73(18) |
| O(20)-Tb(1)-O(24)        | 149.7(2)   | O(1)-Ag(1)-O(16)    | 85.61(19)  |

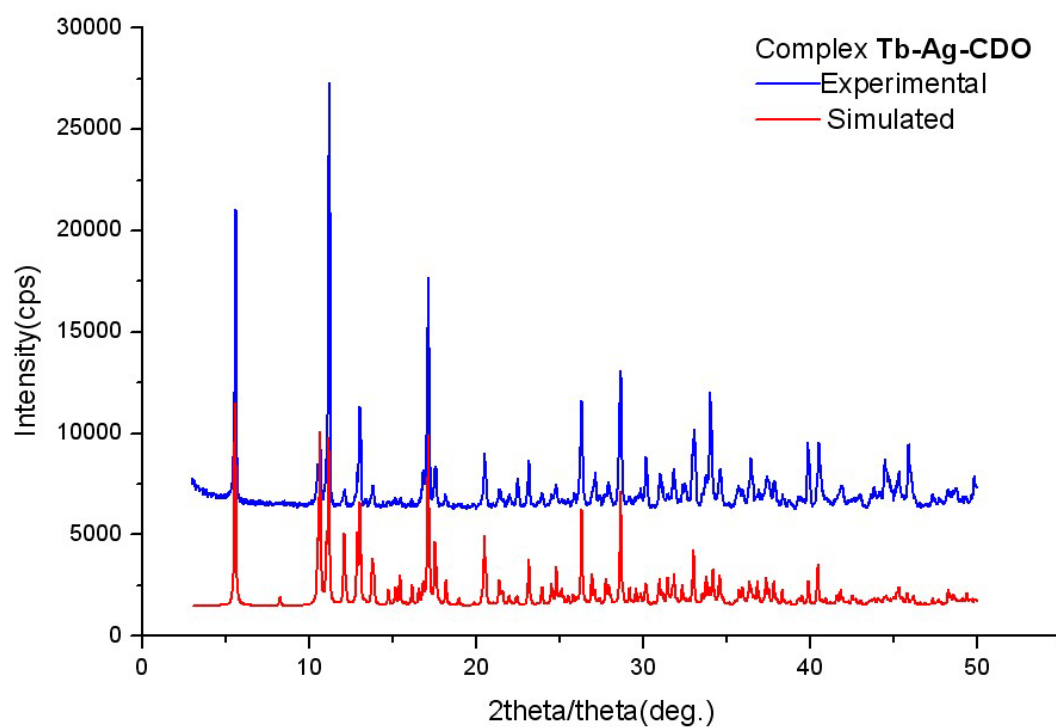
O(22)-Tb(1)-O(24)            74.5(2)

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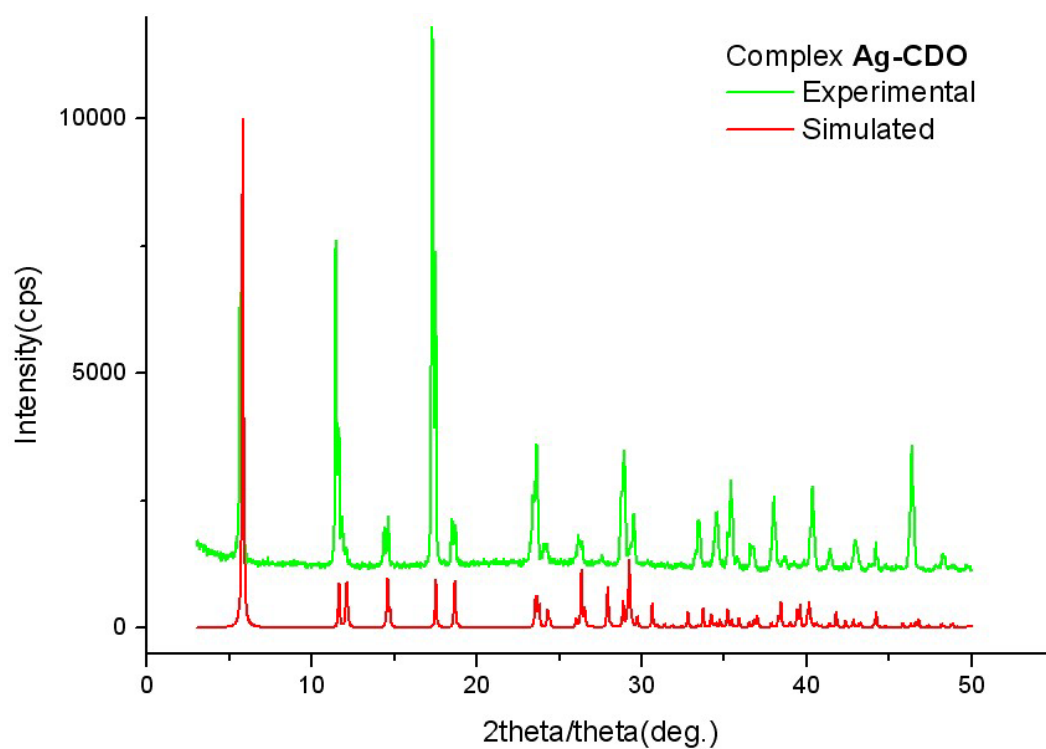
Symmetry transformations used to generate equivalent atoms, **Ag-CDO**: #1  $-x+2, -y+1, -z+1$ ; #2  $x, y-1, z$ ; #3  $x, y+1, z$ ; #4  $-x+2, -y, -z+1$ . **Tb-Ag-CDO**: #1  $-x, -y, -z+2$ ; #2  $-x+1, -y, -z+2$ ; #3  $x, y+1, z+1$ ; #4  $-x+1, -y, -z+1$ ; #5  $x-1, y, z$ ; #6  $-x+1, -y+1, -z+2$ ; #7  $x+1, y+1, z+1$ .



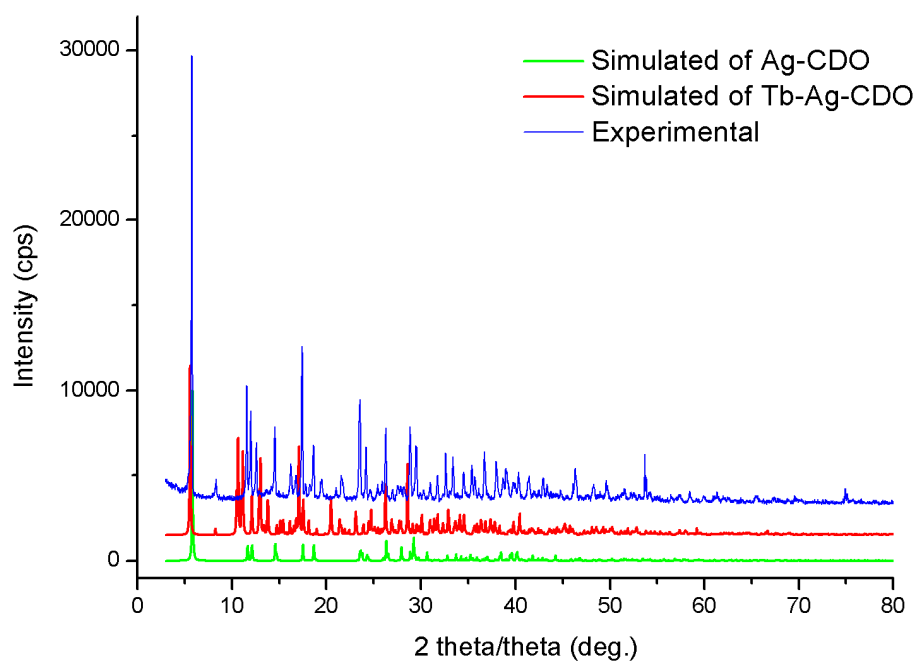
**Figure S1.** The visible sequential crystallization of complexes **Tb-Ag-CDO** and **Ag-CDO** recorded by a camera (photographs viewed in scale of 0.5 cm). (a) after 1h; (b) after 12 h; (c) after 24 h; (d) after two weeks.



**Figure S2.** PXRD of colorless needle crystals selected after 12 h, together with the simulated PXRD of complex **Tb-Ag-CDO**.

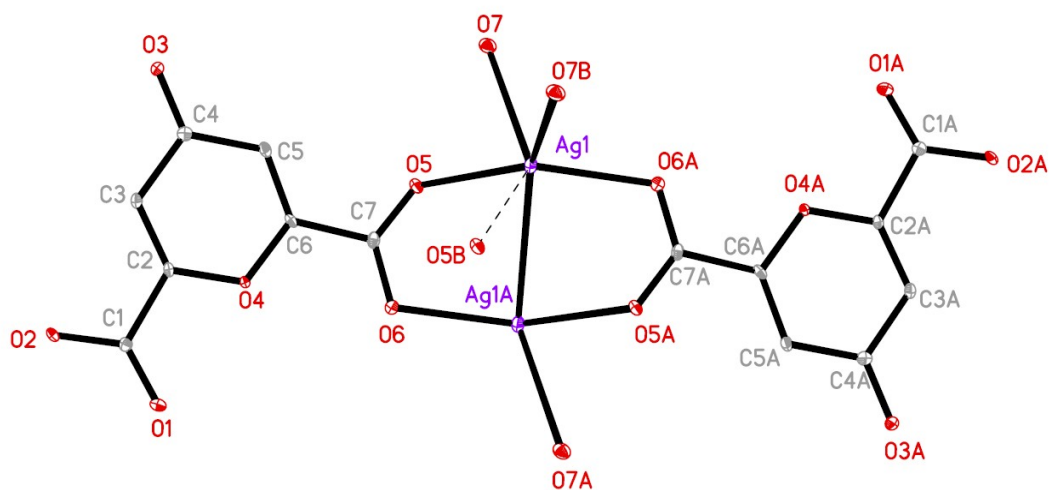


**Figure S3.** PXRD of crystals selected after 24 h, together with the simulated PXRD of complex **Ag-CDO**.

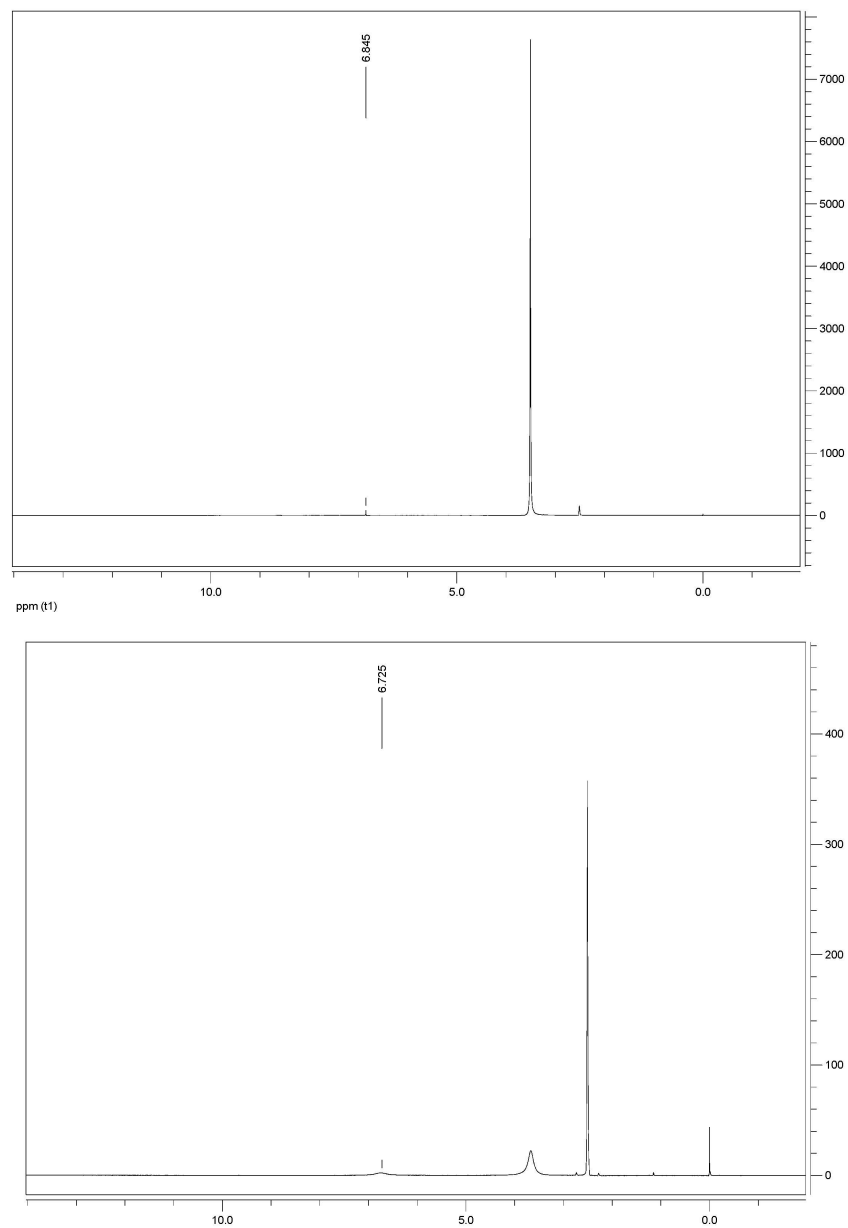


**Figure S4.** PXRD of crystals collected after two weeks, together with the simulated PXRD of complex **Ag-CDO** and **Tb-Ag-CDO**.

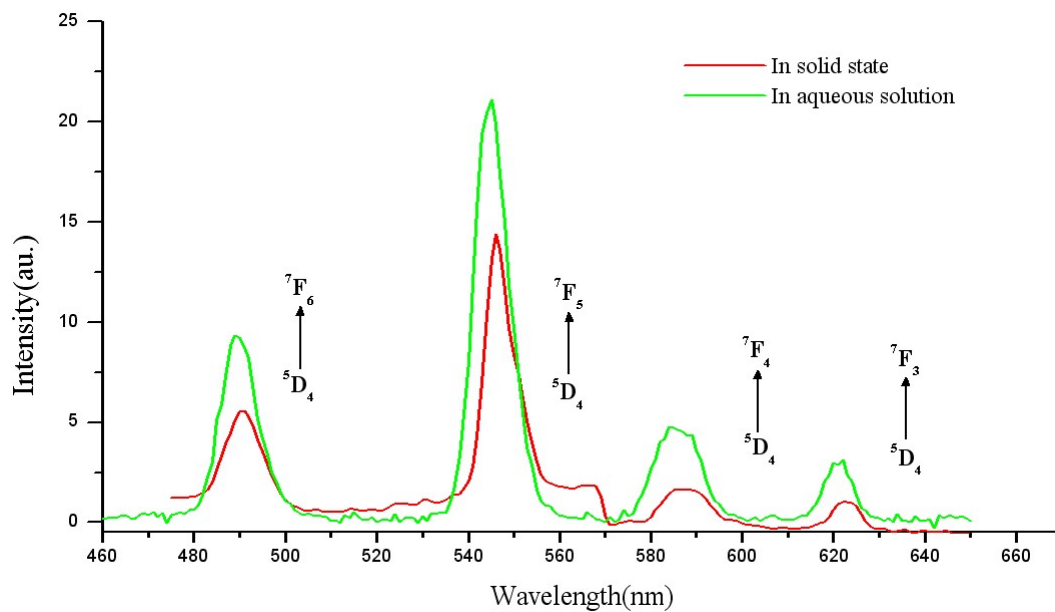




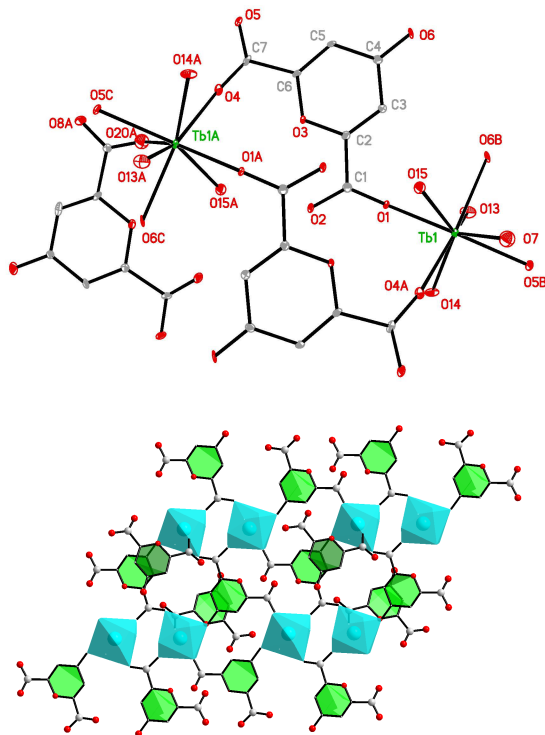
**Figure S5.** ORTEP representation of the coordinating environment of Ag atoms for Ag-CDO (30% probability ellipsoids) (A:  $x, 1+y, z$ ; B:  $2-x, -1-y, 1-z$ ; C:  $2-x, -y, 1-z$ ).



**Figure S6.** (Top)  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **Ag-CDO** in  $\text{D}_2\text{O}$ . (Bottom)  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **Tb-Ag-CDO** in DMSO.



**Figure S7.** Emission spectra of complex **Tb-Ag-CDO** in solid state and in aqueous solution at RT. (solid state in red, aqueous solution in green).



**Figure S8.** (Top) Coordination environment of Tb atom. (Bottom) 2D layer structure of Tb-CDO. Symmetry operator: A =  $x, y, z$ ; B =  $1+x, y, 1+z$ ; C =  $-x, 1-y, 2-z$ .