

Cite this: *Org. Biomol. Chem.*, 2013, **11**, 2460

Otherwise inert reaction of sulfonamides/carboxamides with formamides *via* proton transfer-enhanced reactivity†

Zaihai Niu,^a Shaoxia Lin,^a Zhiyong Dong,^a Hao Sun,^a Fushun Liang^{*a,b} and Jingping Zhang^{*a}Received 4th December 2012,
Accepted 10th February 2013

DOI: 10.1039/c3ob27351b

www.rsc.org/obc

NBS-mediated addition–elimination reaction of sulfonamides/carboxamides and formamides afforded *N*-sulfonylamidines and *N*-formylarylamides, respectively, depending on the different mechanism of elimination. Hydrogen bond-induced proton transfer leads to enhanced reactivities and was proposed as the key driving force for the reaction to take place. The protocol demonstrates the possibility of constructing chemical bonds based on a proton transfer strategy induced by noncovalent hydrogen bond interaction.

Introduction

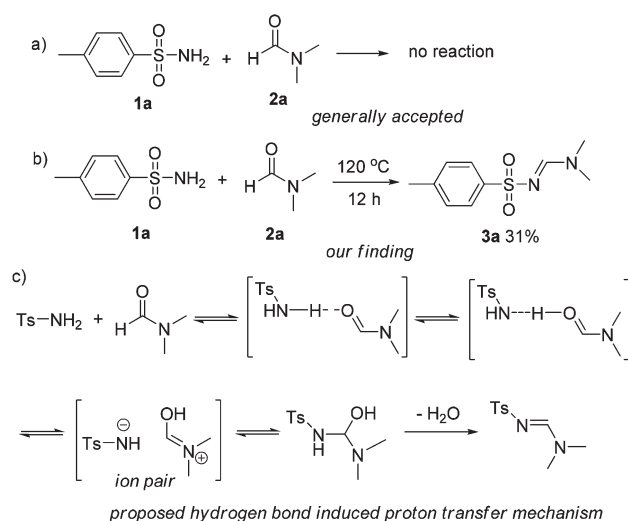
As well known noncovalent interactions, hydrogen bonding¹ has found vast applications in areas such as molecular recognition, crystal engineering, and biological systems.² Recently, organic catalysis *via* noncovalent weak interactions has attracted increasing interest from synthetic chemists.³ For instance, Schreiner and Wittkopp reported a H-bonded complex of an *N*-acyloxazolidinone with an *N,N'*-disubstituted electron-poor thiourea and used it in Diels–Alder reactions.⁴ Jacobsen and co-workers developed hydrogen bond activation of benzhydryl bromide by anion binding to the benzhydryl cations formed.⁵ Zhang *et al.* reported C–N bond cleavage of allylic amines *via* hydrogen bond activation with alcohol solvents in Pd-catalyzed allylic alkylation.⁶ Thus, the exploration of hydrogen bond activation in organic synthesis is an extremely appealing yet challenging goal.

Results and discussion

In our research on halogen (*e.g.* halogenation, halonium, hypervalent halogen and halogen bond) mediated organic reactions,⁷ we would like to communicate here an otherwise inert reaction of sulfonamides/carboxamides with formamides leading to amidines and *N*-formylamides. Proton transfer induced by hydrogen bond interaction led to enhanced

reactivity and was proposed as the key driving force for the reaction to take place in this work (Scheme 1).

The initial investigation started from 4-methylbenzenesulfonamide (**1a**) and *N,N*-dimethylformamide⁸ (**2a**). Generally, the reaction between them is quite difficult, due to their inherent low reactivities (Scheme 1a). However, in our study, we found that the reaction between **1a** and **2a** (both as reactant and solvent, 2.0 mL) *did* take place at 120 °C, affording *N*-sulfonyl amidine **3a** as a single product in reproducible yield (Scheme 1b). The reason for such an unusual reaction to occur may be explained as hydrogen bond activation (Scheme 1c), which leads to simultaneously increased nucleophilicity for TsNH₂ and electrophilicity for DMF.^{9–11} Consequently, direct

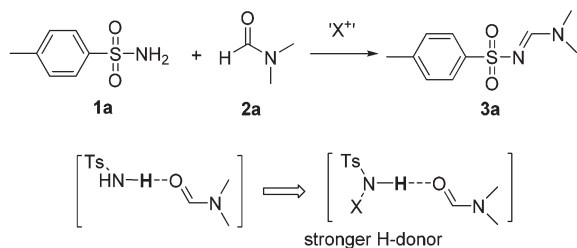


Scheme 1 Initial investigation.

^aDepartment of Chemistry, Northeast Normal University, Changchun 130024, China. E-mail: liangfs112@nenu.edu.cn; Fax: (+86) 431-85099759

^bKey Laboratory for UV-Emitting Materials and Technology of Ministry of Education, Northeast Normal University, Changchun 130024, China

†Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Experimental details and characterization for all new compounds. See DOI: 10.1039/c3ob27351b



Scheme 2 Proton transfer promoted by halogen activated hydrogen bond interaction.

addition was achieved, along with the subsequent elimination of water, to give **3a**, although in modest yield.

Encouraged by the preliminary results and with the aim of increasing the product yield and lowering the temperature, we subsequently sought a halogen activator to do this reaction (Scheme 2). The role of the halogen activator is to make TsNH₂ a stronger H-donor by the formation of TsNHBr,^{12,13} and further reinforce the hydrogen bond interaction with DMF.⁴ To our delight, with readily available NBS as the halogen source, the reaction of **1a** in anhydrous DMF (**2a**) proceeded at 80 °C, giving **3a** in 63% yield (Table 1, entry 1). It was found that the addition of trace amounts of water can further increase the yield to 89% (entries 2–4), which is consistent with the mechanism proposed afterward. In addition to NBS, NIS and DIB exhibited similar reactivity, while NCS gave lower efficiency (entries 5–7). The screening of other solvents like toluene, THF, MeNO₂ and MeCN gave unsatisfactory results (entries 8–11). Thus, in the following work, anhydrous DMF was used as the solvent with the addition of 0.2 equiv. of water, and commercially available and inexpensive NBS was selected as the halogen source.

Table 1 Optimization of the reaction conditions^a

Entry	X ⁺	Solvent	H ₂ O (equiv.)	Yield ^b (%)
1	NBS	DMF	—	63
2	NBS	DMF	1.0	77
3	NBS	DMF	0.5	88
4	NBS	DMF	0.2	89
5	NIS	DMF	0.2	89
6	NCS	DMF	0.2	41
7	DIB	DMF	0.2	88
8	NBS	Toluene	0.2	76
9	NBS	THF	0.2	<5
10	NBS	MeNO ₂	0.2	33
11	NBS	MeCN	0.2	52

^a Reaction conditions: **1a** (1.0 mmol), NBS (1.1 equiv.), H₂O (*x* equiv.) in anhydrous DMF (2.0 mL) at 80 °C for 7.5 h (entries 1–7). **1a** (1.0 mmol), **2a** (2.0 equiv.), NBS (1.1 equiv.), H₂O (0.2 equiv.) in anhydrous solvent (2.0 mL) at 80 °C for 7.5 h (entries 8–11). ^b Isolated yield.

Table 2 NBS-mediated reactions of arylsulfonamides and formamides^{a,b}

3b , 87%	3c , 91%	3d , 84%
3e , 81%	3f , 75%	3g , 61%
3h , 80%	3i , 53%	3j , 28%

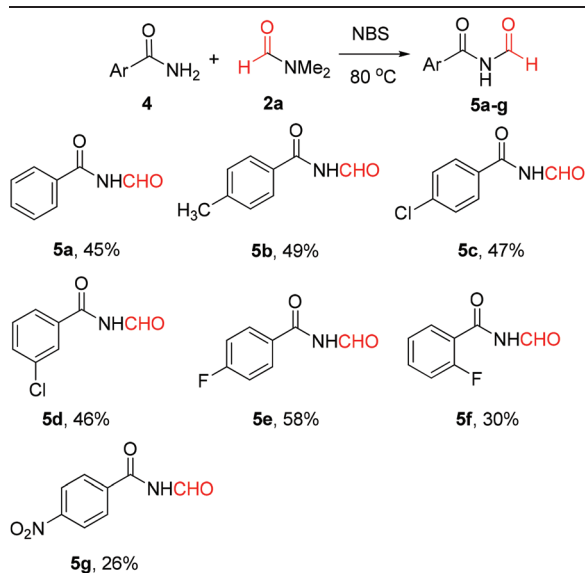
^a Reaction conditions: **1** (1.0 mmol), **2** (2.0 mL), NBS (1.1 equiv.) and H₂O (0.2 equiv.) at 80 °C for 5–6 h. ^b Yield of isolated product.

Thus, a variety of substituted sulfonamides including arylsulfonamides and heteroarylsulfonamides were subjected to the reaction conditions (Table 2). All the reactions with DMF proceeded efficiently, giving *N*-sulfonylamidines **3b–h** in 61–91% yield. Additionally, reactions with other formamides like *N,N*-diethylformamide and morpholine-4-carbaldehyde also proceeded smoothly, and the corresponding products **3i** and **3j** were attained, albeit in low to moderate yields.¹⁴ Amidine derivatives have been widely used in medicinal chemistry, as well as being key intermediates in organic synthesis.¹⁵ The protocol provides a straightforward and efficient entry to *N*-sulfonyl amidines of type **3**.

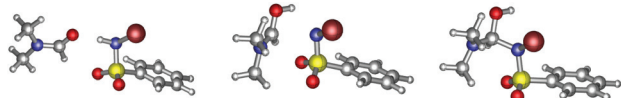
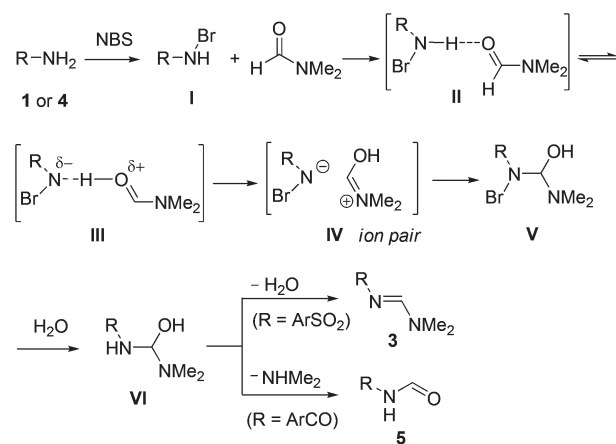
In order to further explore the halogen-mediated reaction developed here and its utility in organic synthesis, arylcarboxamides were investigated in the following work. As a result, reactions activated by NBS proceeded smoothly at 80 °C, and a variety of *N*-formylated products **5a–g** were produced in 26–58% yield (Table 3).¹⁶ Such a transformation demonstrates an alternative mild *N*-formylation method.¹⁷

Computational calculation was conducted with the aim of understanding the role of halogen in the reaction and the possible mechanism. Fig. 1 shows the structures of intermediates and transition states **6–8** involved in the transformation. One can clearly observe the formation of an N–H···O hydrogen bond (H···O distance 1.78 Å; N···C distance 3.51 Å) in **6** and subsequent proton transfer from arylsulfonamide to DMF (H···O distance 0.99 Å; N···C distance 2.52 Å) to give transition state **7**, which causes significant charge density redistribution on the nitrogen atom of the sulfonamide and the carbonyl carbon atom of DMF (see the ESI† for details). Intermediate **8** corresponds to the structure of the resulting C–N adduct.¹⁸

On the basis of all the results described above, the possible mechanism for the reaction of sulfonamide/carboxamide and

Table 3 NBS-mediated reactions of arylcarboxamides and DMF^{a,b}

^a Reaction conditions: **4** (1.0 mmol), **2a** (2.0 mL), NBS (1.1 equiv.) and H₂O (0.2 equiv.) at 80 °C for 5–6 h. ^b Isolated yield.

**Fig. 1** Selected structures of intermediates and transition states **6–8** (left to right).**Scheme 3** Proposed halogen activated hydrogen bond induced proton transfer mechanism.

DMF is depicted in Scheme 3. The reaction of sulfonamide/carboxamide with NBS yields *N*-bromosulfonamide or *N*-bromocarboxamide (**I**).¹² The hydrogen bond interaction between intermediate **I** and DMF gives rise to asymmetric hydrogen bond adducts **II** and **III**.¹⁰ Furthermore, ion pair **IV** is proposed to be generated with enhanced nucleophilicity for TsNH₂ and

electrophilicity for DMF.¹¹ Obviously, dual activation of the two types of substrates was achieved *via* proton transfer induced by the hydrogen bond interaction. As a result, direct C–N bond formation furnishes the adduct **V**. Hydrolysis of **V** generates acetal **VI**. Finally, amidines **3** are produced upon elimination of water for sulfonamide substrates **1**. For carboxamide substrates **4**, *N*-formylation products **5** are attained *via* elimination of dimethylamine. The protocol demonstrates the possibility of constructing chemical bonds by a proton transfer strategy induced by noncovalent hydrogen bond interaction. It was noteworthy that both *N*-sulfonylamidine and *N*-formylarylamide products were prepared in modest to high yields, which is inferior to the results reported by Wan and co-workers.¹⁹ This is most probably due to the existence of the equilibrium in the proton transfer process (**II** → **III** → **IV** → **V**). Computational calculation indicates a high energy barrier in this step (see the ESI†). The subsequent hydrolysis and elimination of water or dimethylamine (**V** → **VI** → **3/5**) lead to the final compounds.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have reported, for the first time, NBS-mediated addition–elimination of sulfonamides/carboxamides and formamides. The reaction afforded *N*-sulfonylamidines and *N*-formylarylamides, respectively, depending on the type of elimination. The simple and straightforward approach not only provides a synthetic method toward *N*-sulfonylamidines and *N*-formylamides, but also illustrates the possibility and potential of non-covalent hydrogen bond-induced proton transfer as a complementary strategy for chemical bond formation. Further work on hydrogen bond activation and its application in organic synthesis is underway in our laboratory.

Experimental

General methods

All reagents were purchased from commercial sources and used without treatment, unless otherwise indicated. The products were purified by column chromatography over silica gel. ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded at 25 °C on a Varian 500 MHz and 125 MHz, respectively, using TMS as internal standard. Elemental analyses were measured on an E-2400 analyzer (Perkin-Elmer). Mass spectra were recorded on an Agilent 1100 LCMsD mass spectrometer.

General procedure for the preparation of **3 and **5** (3a as an example).** To a solution of 4-methylbenzenesulfonamide **1a** (171 mg, 1.0 mmol) in DMF (2 mL) was added NBS (196 mg, 1.1 mmol) and water (3.6 μL). The mixture was stirred at 80 °C. After the starting material **1a** was consumed as indicated by TLC, the reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and poured into water and then extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (3 × 10 mL). The combined organic phase was washed with water (3 × 10 mL), dried over anhydrous MgSO₄, filtered and

concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified by flash chromatography (silica gel, petroleum ether : ether = 1 : 2) to give **3a** (198 mg, 88%) as a white solid.

Physical data of compounds isolated

***N,N*-Dimethyl-*N'*-tosylformimidamide (3a)**. White solid, m.p. 134–136 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 2.40 (s, 3H), 3.01 (s, 3H), 3.13 (s, 3H), 7.25–7.27 (d, *J* = 9.5 Hz, 2H), 7.77–7.78 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 8.13 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 21.4, 35.5, 41.4, 126.4, 129.3, 139.4, 142.4, 159.0; MS calcd *m/z* 226.08, found 227.08 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₀H₁₄N₂O₂S: C, 53.08; H, 6.24; N, 12.38; Found: C, 53.29; H, 6.26; N, 12.43%.

***N,N*-Dimethyl-*N'*-(*o*-tolylsulfonyl)formimidamide (3b)**. Yellowish oil. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 7.85–7.83 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.32–7.30 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 3.70 (s, 2H), 3.29–3.27 (t, *J* = 5.5 Hz, 2H), 2.43 (s, 3H), 1.70–1.68 (t, *J* = 3 Hz, 4H), 1.55–1.53 (d, *J* = 5.5 Hz, 2H); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): δ = 191.6, 165.6, 145.8, 130.7, 129.63, 129.59, 46.9, 42.0, 26.1, 25.4, 24.3, 21.8; MS calcd *m/z* 231.1, found 232.1 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₄H₁₇NO₂: C, 72.70; H, 7.41; N, 6.06; Found: C, 72.79; H, 7.40; N, 6.05%.

***N,N*-Dimethyl-*N'*-(phenylsulfonyl)formimidamide (3c)**. White solid, m.p. 128–129 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.03 (s, 3H), 3.14 (s, 3H), 7.45–7.52 (m, 3H), 7.89–7.91 (m, 2H), 8.15 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.4, 41.4, 126.2, 128.6, 131.7, 142.2, 159.1; MS calcd *m/z* 212.27, found 213.27 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₉H₁₂N₂O₂S: C, 50.92; H, 5.70; N, 13.20; Found: C, 51.03; H, 5.75; N, 13.11.

***N'*-(4-Chlorophenylsulfonyl)-*N,N*-dimethylformimidamide (3d)**. White solid, m.p. 117–119 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.03 (s, 3H), 3.15 (s, 3H), 7.43–7.45 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.82–7.84 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 8.13 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.8, 41.8, 128.2, 128.3, 129.0, 129.2, 138.4, 141.1, 159.4; MS calcd *m/z* 246.02, found 247.02 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₉H₁₁ClN₂O₂S: C, 43.81; H, 4.49; N, 11.35; Found: C, 43.89; H, 4.47; N, 11.28%.

***N,N*-Dimethyl-*N'*-(4-nitrophenylsulfonyl)formimidamide (3e)**. White solid, m.p. 197–201 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.06 (s, 3H), 3.19 (s, 3H), 8.07–8.09 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 8.16 (s, 1H), 8.31–8.32 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.7, 41.7, 124.0, 127.9, 148.1, 149.5, 159.4; MS calcd *m/z* 257.05, found 258.05 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₉H₁₁N₃O₄S: C, 42.02; H, 4.31; N, 16.33; Found: C, 42.25; H, 4.35; N, 16.39%.

***N'*-(4-Methoxyphenylsulfonyl)-*N,N*-dimethylformimidamide (3f)**. White solid, m.p. 133–135 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.01 (s, 3H), 3.12 (s, 3H), 3.85 (s, 3H), 6.93–6.95 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 2H), 7.82–7.84 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 8.13 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.5, 41.4, 55.5, 113.8, 128.5, 134.2, 158.8, 162.2; MS calcd *m/z* 242.07, found 243.07 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₀H₁₄N₂O₃S: C, 49.57; H, 5.82; N, 11.56; Found: C, 49.68; H, 5.89; N, 11.69%.

Methyl 2-(*N*-((dimethylamino)methylene)sulfamoyl)benzoate (3g). White solid, m.p. 128–129 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.03 (s, 3H), 3.17 (s, 3H), 3.95 (s, 3H), 7.28–7.57

(m, 3H), 8.10 (s, 1H), 8.12–8.14 (t, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.5, 41.5, 52.9, 128.5, 129.0, 130.5, 131.6, 131.6, 140.2, 160.7, 168.4; MS calcd *m/z* 270.30, found 271.30 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₁H₁₄N₂O₄S: C, 48.88; H, 5.22; N, 10.36; Found: C, 48.99; H, 5.26; N, 10.27%.

***N'*-(5-Bromothiophen-2-ylsulfonyl)-*N,N*-dimethylformimidamide (3h)**. White solid, m.p. 102–104 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 3.06 (s, 3H), 3.17 (s, 3H), 7.00–7.01 (d, *J* = 4.0 Hz, 1H), 7.33–7.34 (d, *J* = 4.0 Hz, 1H), 8.11 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 35.7, 41.7, 118.4, 130.0, 130.5, 145.0, 159.4; MS calcd *m/z* 297.19, found 298.19 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₇H₉BrN₂O₂S₂: C, 28.29; H, 3.05; N, 9.43; Found: C, 28.50; H, 3.09; N, 9.59%.

***N,N*-Diethyl-*N'*-tosylformimidamide (3i)**. Yellow solid, m.p. 69–71 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 1.13–1.16 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H), 1.24–1.27 (q, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 3H), 3.36–3.39 (m, 2H), 3.45–3.48 (m, 2H), 7.25–7.27 (d, *J* = 9.5 Hz, 2H), 7.76–7.78 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 8.15 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 12.1, 14.5, 21.5, 40.1, 47.0, 126.3, 129.2, 139.7, 142.3, 158.0; MS calcd *m/z* 254.35, found 255.35 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₂H₁₈N₂O₂S: C, 56.67; H, 7.13; N, 11.01; Found: C, 56.88; H, 7.19; N, 11.22%.

4-Methyl-*N*-(morpholinomethylene)benzenesulfonamide (3j). White solid, m.p. 166–168 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 2.41 (s, 3H), 3.48–3.50 (t, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 2H), 3.68 (s, 4H), 3.75–3.77 (t, *J* = 4.8 Hz, 2H), 7.27–7.28 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.76–7.78 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 8.19 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 21.5, 44.1, 50.2, 65.9, 66.7, 126.5, 129.3, 139.0, 142.7, 157.5; MS calcd *m/z* 268.33, found 269.33 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₁₂H₁₆N₂O₃S: C, 53.71; H, 6.01; N, 10.44; Found: C, 53.62; H, 6.09; N, 10.66%.

***N*-Formylbenzamide (5a)**. White solid, m.p. 107–109 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 7.53–7.56 (t, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.64–7.67 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 8.02–8.03 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 9.41–9.43 (d, *J* = 9.5 Hz, 1H), 10.32–10.34 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 128.1, 129.0, 130.9, 133.9, 165.0, 166.7; MS calcd *m/z* 149.15, found 150.15 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₈H₇NO₂: C, 64.42; H, 4.73; N, 9.39; Found: C, 64.65; H, 4.75; N, 9.50%.

***N*-Formyl-4-methylbenzamide (5b)**. White solid, m.p. 130–132 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm) δ = 2.43 (s, 3H), 7.32–7.33 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.91–7.93 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 9.38–9.40 (d, *J* = 9.5 Hz, 1H), 10.34 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 125 MHz, ppm): 21.6, 128.2, 128.2, 129.7, 144.9, 165.1, 166.6; MS calcd *m/z* 163.17, found 164.17 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₉H₉NO₂: C, 66.25; H, 5.56; N, 8.58; Found: C, 66.36; H, 5.59; N, 8.69%.

4-Chloro-*N*-formylbenzamide (5c). White solid, m.p. 183–187 °C. ¹H NMR (DMSO, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 7.59–7.61 (m, 2H), 8.00–8.03 (m, 2H), 9.24 (s, 1H), 11.77 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (DMSO, 125 MHz, ppm): 129.3, 130.8, 138.9, 164.9, 167.1 (one of the signals was not observed); MS calcd *m/z* 183.59, found 184.59 [(*M* + 1)]⁺. Anal. Calcd for C₈H₆ClNO₂: C, 52.34; H, 3.29; N, 7.63; Found: C, 52.55; H, 3.38; N, 7.76%.

3-Chloro-*N*-formylbenzamide (5d). White solid, m.p. 135–139 °C. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz, ppm): δ = 7.48–7.51

(t, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.62–7.64 (m, 1H), 7.87–7.89 (m, 1H), 8.01–8.02 (t, $J = 1.8$ Hz, 1H), 9.39–9.41 (d, $J = 9.5$ Hz, 1H), 10.18–10.19 (d, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 125 MHz, ppm): 125.9, 128.5, 130.3, 132.8, 133.9, 135.5, 164.7, 165.5; MS calcd m/z 183.59, found 184.59 $[(M + 1)]^+$. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_8\text{H}_6\text{ClNO}_2$: C, 52.34; H, 3.29; N, 7.63; Found: C, 52.16; H, 3.34; N, 7.76%.

4-Fluoro-N-formylbenzamide (5e). White solid, m.p. 155–156 °C. ^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , 500 MHz, ppm): $\delta = 7.21$ – 7.25 (t, $J = 8.3$ Hz, 2H), 8.06–8.08 (m, 2H), 9.39–9.41 (d, $J = 9.5$ Hz, 1H), 10.30 (s, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 125 MHz, ppm): 116.3, 116.4, 127.17, 127.2, 130.8, 130.9, 165.0, 165.2, 165.5, 167.2 (more signals were observed due to tautomerization); MS calcd m/z 167.14, found 168.14 $[(M + 1)]^+$. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_8\text{H}_6\text{FNO}_2$: C, 57.49; H, 3.62; N, 8.38; Found: C, 57.60; H, 3.69; N, 8.49%.

2-Fluoro-N-formylbenzamide (5f). White solid, m.p. 78–82 °C. ^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , 500 MHz, ppm): $\delta = 7.20$ – 7.24 (m, 1H), 7.34–7.37 (m, 1H), 7.62–7.66 (m, 1H), 8.11–8.14 (m, 1H), 9.15 (s, 1H), 9.38–9.40 (m, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 125 MHz, ppm): 116.5, 116.7, 118.6, 118.6, 125.4, 125.4, 132.2, 135.9, 136.0, 160.1, 162.1, 162.5, 163.1 (more signals were observed due to tautomerization); MS calcd m/z 167.14, found 168.14 $[(M + 1)]^+$. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_8\text{H}_6\text{FNO}_2$: C, 57.49; H, 3.62; N, 8.38; Found: C, 57.31; H, 3.65; N, 8.52%.

N-Formyl-4-nitrobenzamide (5g). Yellow solid, m.p. 162–165 °C. ^1H NMR (DMSO, 500 MHz, ppm) $\delta = 8.21$ – 8.23 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 2H), 8.34–8.36 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 2H), 9.26 (s, 1H), 11.98 (s, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (DMSO, 125 MHz, ppm): 124.2, 130.5, 137.7, 150.6, 164.8, 166.9; MS calcd m/z 194.14, found 195.14 $[(M + 1)]^+$. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_8\text{H}_6\text{N}_2\text{O}_4$: C, 49.49; H, 3.12; N, 14.43; Found: C, 49.60; H, 3.16; N, 14.25%.

Acknowledgements

Financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (21172034), the Program for New Century Excellent Talents in University (NCET-11-0611), the Department of Science and Technology of Jilin Province (201215002), the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (11SSXT129) and the Open Project of State Key Laboratory of Supramolecular Structure and Materials (SKLSSM2013006), is gratefully acknowledged.

Notes and references

- (a) P. M. Pihko, *Hydrogen bonding in organic synthesis*, ed. Wiley-VCH, Weinheim, 2009; (b) G. Gilli and P. Gilli, *The Nature of the Hydrogen Bond: Outline of a Comprehensive Hydrogen Bond Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009.
- Selected examples: (a) C. J. Serpell, N. L. Kilah, P. J. Costa, V. Félix and P. D. Beer, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2010, **49**, 5322–5326; (b) A. Caballero, N. G. White and P. D. Beer, *Chem. Int. Ed.*, 2011, **50**, 1845–1848; (c) M. G. Chudzinski, C. A. McClary and M. S. Taylor, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 10559–10567; (d) O. Bolton, K. Lee, H.-J. Kim, K. Y. Lin and J. Kim, *Nat. Chem.*, 2011, **3**, 205–210.
- (a) P. R. Schreiner, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2003, **32**, 289–296; (b) E. N. Jacobsen and D. W. C. MacMillan, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.*, 2010, **107**, 20618–20619; (c) A. Crespo-Pena, D. Monge, E. Martín-Zamora, E. Alvarez, R. Fernandez and J. M. Lassaletta, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2012, **134**, 12912–12915.
- P. R. Schreiner and A. Wittkopp, *Org. Lett.*, 2002, **4**, 217–220.
- A. R. Brown, W.-H. Kuo and E. N. Jacobsen, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2010, **132**, 9286–9288.
- X. Zhao, D. Liu, H. Guo, Y. Liu and W. Zhang, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 19354–19357.
- (a) Y. Wei, S. Lin, H. Xue, F. Liang and B. Zhao, *Org. Lett.*, 2012, **14**, 712–715; (b) Y. Wei, S. Lin, J. Zhang, Z. Niu, Q. Fu and F. Liang, *Chem. Commun.*, 2011, **47**, 12394–12396; (c) Y. Wei, S. Lin and F. Liang, *Org. Lett.*, 2012, **14**, 4202–4205; (d) J. Zhang, Y. Wei, S. Lin, F. Liang and P. Liu, *Org. Biomol. Chem.*, 2012, **10**, 9237–9242; (e) Y. Wei, S. Lin, F. Liang and J. Zhang, *Org. Lett.*, 2013, **15**, 852–855.
- For reviews on DMF, see: (a) J. Muzart, *Tetrahedron*, 2009, **65**, 8313–8323; (b) S. Ding and N. Jiao, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2012, **51**, 9226–9237; For recent papers with DMF reagent as a useful building block, see: (c) S. Ding and N. Jiao, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2011, **133**, 12374–12377; (d) S. H. Cho, J. Y. Kim, S. Y. Lee and S. Chang, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2009, **48**, 9127–9130; (e) G. S. Kumar, C. U. Maheswari, R. A. Kumar, M. L. Kantam and K. R. Reddy, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2011, **50**, 11748–11751; (f) Z. Liu, J. Zhang, S. Chen, E. Shi, Y. Xu and X. Wan, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2012, **51**, 3231–3235; (g) J. Kim, J. Choi, K. Shin and S. Chang, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2012, **134**, 2528–2531.
- For the computational calculation of the structures of possible intermediates and transition states, please see the ESI†
- For a recent paper on asymmetric hydrogen bonding system, see: A. L. Lieblein, M. Krämer, A. Dreuw, B. Fürtig and H. Schwalbe, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2012, **51**, 4067–4070.
- For selected examples of ion pairs involved in the reaction, see: (a) C. Kanta De, E. G. Klauber and D. Seidel, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2009, **131**, 17060–17061; (b) X. Xin, D. Wang, X. Li and B. Wan, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2012, **51**, 1693–1697; (c) I. T. Raheem, P. S. Thiara, E. A. Peterson and E. N. Jacobsen, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 2007, **129**, 13404–13405; (d) ref. 5 (e) In our recent publication, an ion pair intermediate from NBS and DBU combination was proposed, see: ref. 7c.
- (a) Z. Wang, Y. Zhang, H. Fu, Y. Jiang and Y. Zhao, *Org. Lett.*, 2008, **10**, 1863–1866; (b) X. Liu, Y. Zhang, L. Wang, H. Fu, Y. Jiang and Y. Zhao, *J. Org. Chem.*, 2008, **73**, 6207–6212; (c) V. V. Thakur, S. K. Talluri and A. Sudalai, *Org. Lett.*, 2003, **5**, 861–864; (d) S. K. Talluri and A. Sudalai, *Org. Lett.*, 2005, **7**, 855–857.

- 13 For a review on the utilization of N–X bonds in organic synthesis, see: S. Minakata, *Acc. Chem. Res.*, 2009, **42**, 1172–1182.
- 14 Other amides like 1-formyl-piperidine and *N,N*-dimethylacetamide proved to be inefficient when subjected to the reaction sequences.
- 15 (a) S. Patai and Z. Rappoport, *The Chemistry of Amidines and Imidates*, Wiley, New York, 1991; (b) G. V. Boyd, in *The Chemistry of Amidines and Imidates*, ed. S. Patai and Z. Rappoport, Wiley, New York, 1991, vol. 2, ch. 8; (c) J. V. Greenhill and P. Lue, *Prog. Med. Chem.*, 1993, **30**, 203–326; (d) P. Sienkiewicz, K. Bielawski, A. Bielawska and J. Palka, *Environ. Toxicol. Pharmacol.*, 2005, **20**, 118–124; (e) M. Y. Lee, M. H. Kim, J. Kim, S. H. Kim, B. T. Kim, I. H. Jeong, S. Chang, S. H. Kim and S.-Y. Chang, *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.*, 2010, **20**, 541–545; (f) H. Heitsch, R. H. A. Becker, H.-W. Kleemann and A. Wagner, *Bioorg. Med. Chem.*, 1997, **5**, 673–678; (g) A. A. Bekhit, H. M. A. Ashour, Y. S. Abdel Ghany, A. E.-D. A. Bekhit and A. Baraka, *Eur. J. Med. Chem.*, 2008, **43**, 456–463.
- 16 The efficiency of the formation of amidines and *N*-formylated products was relatively low. Most probably, the reversible proton transfer process is the main reason, which cannot drive the reaction to completion. Also see the mechanism part.
- 17 Selected examples of *N*-formylation, see: (a) F. F. Blicke and C. Lu, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1952, **74**, 3933–3934; (b) J. Waki and J. Meienhofer, *J. Org. Chem.*, 1977, **42**, 2019–2020; (c) H. L. Yale, *J. Org. Chem.*, 1971, **36**, 3238–3240; (d) L. Kisfaludy and O. Laszlo, *Synthesis*, 1987, 510; (e) M. Nerveux, C. Bruneau and P. H. Dixneuf, *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1*, 1991, 1197–1199; (f) W. Duzek, J. Deutsch, S. Vieth and H.-J. Niclas, *Synthesis*, 1996, 37–38; (g) P. Strazzoline, A. G. Giumanini and S. Cauci, *Tetrahedron*, 1990, **46**, 1081–1118; (h) J. Akbari, M. Hekmati, M. Sheykhan and A. Heydari, *ARKIVOC*, 2009, 123–129; (i) B. Desai, T. N. Danks and G. Wagner, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 2005, **46**, 955–957; (j) P. G. Reddy, G. D. K. Kumar and S. Baskaran, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 2000, **41**, 9149–9151; (k) M. I. Ansari, M. K. Hussain, N. Yadav, P. K. Gupta and K. Hajela, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 2012, **53**, 2063–2065.
- 18 Initially, we had thought it was the halogen bond interaction that activates the reaction. However, the corresponding energy barrier is too high to overcome. Hydrogen bond interaction appears to be much more reasonable based on the theoretical calculation results. For selected reviews on halogen bonding, see: (a) T. M. Beale, M. G. Chudzinski, M. G. Sarwar and M. S. Taylor, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 2013, **42**, 1667–1680; (b) P. Metrangolo, H. Neukirch, T. Pilati and G. Resnati, *Acc. Chem. Res.*, 2005, **38**, 386–395.
- 19 S. Chen, Y. Xu and X. Wan, *Org. Lett.*, 2011, **13**, 6152–6155.