

2 **PTA-based ruthenium complexes as photosensitizers** 3 **for dye-sensitized solar cells**

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12 **Abstract:** Two novel ruthenium complexes are synthesized and used as photosensitizers in dye-
13 sensitized solar cells (DSCs): [RuCl₂(mPTA)₃(H₂O)](CF₃SO₃)₃ (C1) (m: methyl; PTA: 3,5,7-triaza-
14 phosphadamantane) and [Ru(C=C=CPh₂)Cp(PTA)(PPh₃)](CF₃SO₃) (C2). The complexes are soluble
15 in organic solvents and, interestingly, in water, which makes them useful for water-based
16 photochemical processes. They possess excellent photon-absorption properties over a wide range
17 of the UV-vis spectrum with intense peaks at ~ 330 nm for both sensitizers and a second peak for C2
18 at 525 nm, much stronger than the corresponding to dye N719. The performance of DSCs containing
19 these sensitizers are evaluated using different electrolytes in comparison with a reference cell made
20 with N719. The solar cell performance was similar for both complexes and strongly dependent on
21 the electrolyte, with a maximum conversion efficiency of 0.33 % for the iodide/triiodide electrolyte.
22 In spite of presenting low efficiencies, these novel ruthenium dyes produce electricity from light
23 effectively and are highly stable under irradiation conditions.

24 **Keywords:** ruthenium complex, dye, sensitizer, solar cell, PTA.
25

26 **1. Introduction**

27 The use of dye-sensitized solar cells (DSCs) is a well established strategy for solar energy
28 conversion because of their high efficiency, inexpensive manufacturing and environmental friendly
29 nature [1,2]. DSCs are sandwich-type electrochemical devices based on nanocrystalline metal oxide
30 semiconductors sensitized by molecular dyes [3,4]. The dye (or photosensitizer) is able to absorb a
31 wide range of the solar spectrum to reach its excited state, then producing photoelectrons that are
32 injected directly into the conduction band of the semiconductor (photoelectrode). The semiconductor
33 often consists of a mesoporous TiO₂ film deposited on a transparent fluorine-doped tin oxide (FTO)
34 conducting glass; this provides a large surface area to maximize the light adsorption while ensures
35 the electrical connection dye-electrolyte. The injected electron flow towards the counter electrode, a
36 platinized FTO glass substrate, where they are transferred to the redox pair present in the electrolyte
37 (usually I⁻/I₃⁻). The circuit is completed when the oxidized dye is regenerated to its ground state by
38 electron donation from the electrolyte. As a result, DCSs perform an electrical work through a
39 regenerative photo-electrochemical cycle without consumption of chemical species [5].

40 DSCs use indistinctly natural or synthetic dyes to harvest energy from light [6]. Artificial dyes,
41 usually based on transition metal coordination complexes such as Ru, Os, Pt are the most widely
42 employed since they yield greater efficiencies [7,8]. Ruthenium-based complexes satisfy a few key
43 requirements to work properly, such as photon absorption across a broad range of wavelengths,
44 chelation to TiO₂ surface, and chemical stability. Among these complexes, polypyridyl ruthenium
45 dyes such as the well-known N719, N3, N749 have been widely used and studied for their broad-
46 spectrum absorption, excellent redox characteristics and high stability. Moreover, they strongly

47 bound to the mesoporous TiO₂ film through carboxylate or phosphonate groups, ensuring efficient
 48 electron injection into the photoelectrode. So far, these dyes have achieved conversion efficiencies
 49 >11 % and are considered as benchmark reference sensitizers [9–11].

50 At present, considerable development is focused on the design of novel dye structures to
 51 enhance the dye-sensitized solar cell performance [12]. Progress in the optimization of the dye is
 52 usually performed through systematic variation of the ligands and other substituent groups [13,14].
 53 This strategy allows to control the photon absorption properties as well as the electronic coupling
 54 between the sensitizer excited state and the semiconductor conduction band, which in turn determine
 55 the efficiency of the solar cell. Advances on the design of ruthenium-based dyes and their applications
 56 in DSCs have been extensively reviewed [15–18].

57 In this work, two PTA-based ruthenium complexes are synthesized and investigated as photo-
 58 sensitizers in DSCs: [RuCl₂(mPTA)₃(H₂O)](CF₃SO₃)₃ and [Ru(C=C=CPh₂)Cp(PTA)(PPh₃)](CF₃SO₃)₃,
 59 with m: methyl and PTA: 3,5,7-triaza-phosphaadamantane. The presence of PTA ligands made these
 60 complexes soluble in aqueous solvents, which makes them useful for water-based photochemical
 61 processes. In regard to the UV-vis properties, both complexes present an intense absorption band at
 62 ~ 330 nm while complex 2 displays a much stronger absorption at 525 nm. Moreover, the chelation of
 63 these dyes to the titania film can be accomplished via the PTA groups, similarly to the anchoring
 64 provided by phosphate groups [19]. The efficiency of DSCs containing the complexes in combination
 65 with three electrolytes is evaluated in comparison with the standard dye N719. The electrochemical
 66 behavior was similar for both complexes with a strong influence of the electrolyte. Overall, we found
 67 a maximum conversion efficiency for the DSCs of ~ 0.33 %. However, despite the low efficiencies,
 68 these new dyes produce electricity from light effectively and are chemically stable under irradiation.

69 2. Materials and Methods

70 2.1. Materials

71 Conducting glass plates (FTO) (F-doped SnO₂, with resistance 11–13 Ω/sq, Nippon Sheet Glass)
 72 were used to fabricate the electrodes of the DSCs. Nanocrystalline TiO₂ (P-25, Degussa), Triton X-100
 73 (Merck) and H₂PtCl₆ (Aldrich) were used for preparing the TiO₂ and Pt films onto the FTO plates.
 74 Iodine (99.9%, Aldrich), LiI (99.9%, Aldrich), 4-tert-butylpyridine (TPB) (96%, Aldrich), 1-methyl-3-
 75 propylimidazolium iodide (MPII) (98%, Aldrich), N-Methylbenzimidazole (NMBI) (99%, Aldrich),
 76 Guanidinium thiocyanate (GNCS) (99%, Sigma) and 3-methoxypropionitrile (98%, Aldrich) were
 77 employed to prepare the electrolyte solutions. The dye N719 (95%) and all the other chemicals were
 78 purchased from Sigma-Aldrich with reagent grade and used as received.

79 2.2. Synthesis of the ruthenium complexes

80 All reactions were carried out under a dry nitrogen atmosphere by using standard Schlenk-tube
 81 techniques. The solid complexes were collected on sintered glass-frits and subsequently washed as
 82 described. The following products required for the synthesis were prepared according to literature
 83 procedures: PTA [20], [RuCl₂(PPh₃)₂] [21,22], [RuCpCl(PPh₃)₂] [23] and [RuCpCl(PTA)(PPh₃)] [24,25].

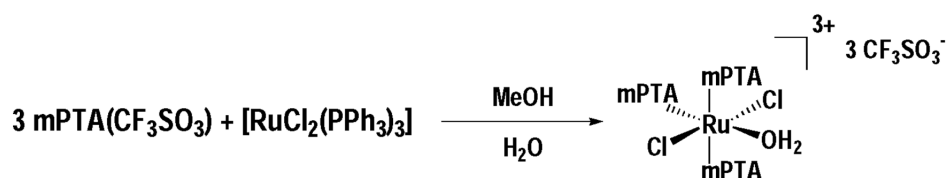
84 2.2.1. Synthesis of complex 1: [RuCl₂(mPTA)₃(H₂O)](CF₃SO₃)₃

85 We first performed the preparation of the compound mPTA(CF₃SO₃)₃, which is one of the
 86 reactants to accomplish the synthesis of complex 1. To this end, MeCF₃SO₃ (0.56 mL, 5.08 mmol) was
 87 added to a stirred PTA (0.6 g, 3.82 mmol) solution prepared in CHCl₃ (60 mL). A white suspension is
 88 formed, which was further stirred for 30 min at room temperature. The resulting white precipitate
 89 was filtered, washed with CHCl₃ and air-dried. Yield: 91.3%.

90 Complex 1 was synthesized by reaction among mPTA(CF₃SO₃)₃ and [RuCl₂(PPh₃)₂] in MeOH
 91 according to Scheme I. The complex [RuCl₂(PPh₃)₂] (450 mg, 0.47 mmol) was dissolved in MeOH (60
 92 mL) and then mPTA(CF₃SO₃)₃ (460 mg, 1.43 mmol) was added. The MeOH used for the synthesis was
 93 not previously dried, providing the water source necessary for the reaction. After 6 h of reaction at
 94 room temperature, a yellow–orange solution was obtained. Next, the solvent was reduced to 15 mL

95 and 20 mL of Et₂O were added. The yellow precipitate formed was filtered under inert atmosphere,
 96 washed with Et₂O and dried under vacuum. Yield: 84%.

97 The yellow complex 1 is soluble and stable in water ($S_{25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}} = 89\text{ mg mL}^{-1}$) at room temperature
 98 and also in the dark. The molecular structure consists of a distorted octahedral ruthenium atom
 99 bonded to two mPTA trans to each other, two Cl ligands trans to each other and one mPTA trans to
 100 one water molecule [26]. The positive charge of the complex is balanced by three CF₃SO₃⁻ counter-
 101 ions. To the best of our knowledge, this complex is the first reported example in which one mPTA is
 102 trans to a H₂O molecule [27].



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Scheme I. Synthesis of the ruthenium complex 1 (C1).

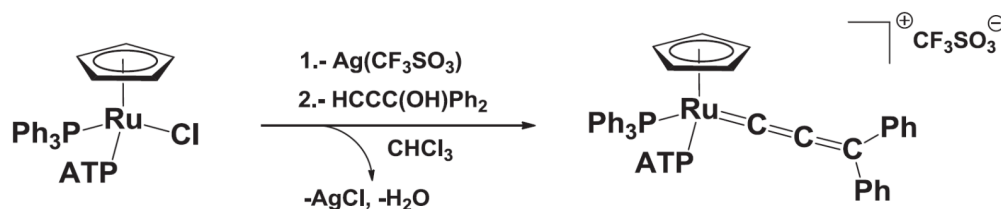
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2.2.2. Synthesis of complex 2: [Ru(C=C=CPh₂)Cp(PTA)(PPh₃)](CF₃SO₃)

106 The allenylidene-ruthenium complex was prepared following the Scheme II. In the synthetic
 107 process, Ag(CF₃SO₃) (0.03 g, 0.12 mmol) dissolved in CHCl₃ (2 mL) was added to a stirred solution of
 108 [RuCpCl(PTA)(PPh₃)] (0.072 g, 0.12 mmol) prepared in 30 mL of CHCl₃. The solution was reacted
 109 with 1,1-diphenyl-2-propyn-1-ol (0.18 g, 0.81mmol) for 5 min at room temperature followed by 2 h of
 110 reaction at refluxing temperature. The resulting mixture was filtered to remove the precipitated AgCl,
 111 yielding a purple solid after the solvent evaporation. The solid, which corresponds to the ruthenium
 112 complex 2 was washed with Et₂O (2 x 5 mL) and dried under vacuum before use. Yield: 0.10 g (94%).

113 Complex 2 is soluble in common organic solvents and slightly soluble in water ($S_{25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}} = 0.1\text{ mg mL}^{-1}$). The formation of the complex is confirmed by ¹³C{¹H} NMR. The spectrum reveals a neat triplet slightly below 293.7 ppm that corresponds to the allenylidene α-carbon coupled to the two phosphines P-atoms. Moreover, signals ascribable to both β- and γ-carbons are detected at the expected chemical shifts. The complex keeps its nature in the solid state, as confirmed by the characteristic allenylidene stretching absorption band observed in the solid IR spectra, $\nu_{(\text{C}=\text{C}=\text{C})}$: 1930 cm⁻¹. The structure is tackled through the X-ray analysis of crystals made of their parent complex, [RuCp(DMSO-κS)(PTA)(PPh₃)]. The calculated cone angle are 133° for the PPh₃ and 109° for the PTA, in agreement with those found for other ruthenium complexes with PPh₃ and PTA ligands [28].

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Scheme II. Synthesis of the ruthenium complex 2 (C2).

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2.3. FTO electrical resistance

125 The influence of the thermal treatment on the electrical resistance, *R*, of FTO glass substrates was
 126 studied following the Van der Pauw method [29]. Before any treatment $R_s = (12.60 \pm 0.20)\ \Omega/\text{sq}$,
 127 whereas after the cleaning process (isopropanol) and activation with temperature (420 °C, 30 min)
 128 the value was $R_s = (13.45 \pm 0.15)\ \Omega/\text{sq}$. The FTO is then a suitable material for solar cell fabrication,
 129 provided that the thermal treatment does not increase significantly the sheet resistance; this, in turn,
 130 ensures the solar cell performance [30].

131 2.4. Fabrication of the photoelectrodes

132 A concentrated paste of TiO₂ (15 wt.%) was prepared by dispersing TiO₂ nanoparticles (diameter
133 = 20 nm) in a mixture of ethanol (61 wt.%) and nitric acid (24 wt.%) under 12 h of continuous stirring
134 at room temperature. The surfactant Triton X-100 (0.2 wt.%) was added and the mixture stirred for
135 additional 12 h.

136 To fabricate the photoelectrode, FTO substrates were covered with transparent adhesive tape
137 (Scotch, 50 μm in thickness), leaving a square-shaped free surface of ~ 0.5 cm². A drop of the TiO₂
138 paste was spread using a glass rod over the square area by the so called doctor-blade technique. The
139 paste was allowed to dry at room temperature for 1h under ethanol atmosphere. Next, the substrate
140 was placed in a muffle furnace (450 °C, 1 h) to calcine the paste, then creating the mesoporous TiO₂
141 film. This procedure yields high quality TiO₂ films without granular features or cracks on the surface
142 [31].

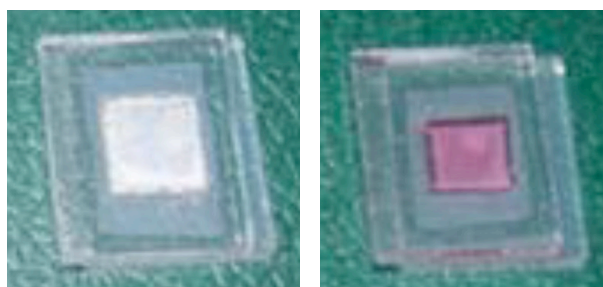
143 The different ruthenium complexes were absorbed onto the TiO₂ film by adding an excess of the
144 dye solution with the titania film facing up. The dye N719 was prepared in ethanol at 3.10⁻⁴ M, C1 in
145 H₂O at 3.10⁻² M, and C2 in chloroform at 3.10⁻³ M. The absorption process was conducted in dark at
146 room temperature for 24 h. The non-adsorbed dye was removed by rinsing the stained titania with
147 ethanol.

148 The platinized counter electrode was made by coating the FTO substrate with a thin layer of Pt.
149 A droplet of the H₂PtCl₆ solution (0.01 M in ethanol) was spread on the surface, followed by a thermal
150 process in air at 380 °C during 20 min.

151 2.5. DSC assembly and chraracterization

152 The solar cells were assembled following the procedure stablished by Ito et al. [32,33]. The dye-
153 sensitized electrode and the counter electrode were put together in a sandwich-type cell using a
154 thermal adhesive film (Dupont Surlyn, 60 μm) to set the gap between the two electrodes and make
155 the solar cell airtight. The electrolytes were introduced in the gap by capillarity from a tiny hole
156 drilled on the counter electrode. As a result of the manufacturing process, we obtain DSCs with an
157 active electrode area of about 0.36 cm².

158 Figure 1 shows DSCs prepared with the ruthenium complexes; the pale yellow cell (left)
159 corresponds to complex 1 whereas complex 2 produces a red cell (right) analogous in color to the
160 solar cell prepared with N719. Note the high transparency of the FTO plates and the fact that the two
161 glass substrates are slightly shifted in order to leave room for the electrical contacts.
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165 **Figure 1.** Dye-sensitized solar cells prepared with the ruthenium complexes C1 (left) and C2 (right).

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167 Photocurrent–voltage (I–V) curves for the DSCs were measured under direct sun radiation in
168 shiny days at noon time. Under these conditions, the solar irradiation was about 800 W/m² in all tests.
169 The light irradiation was determined by a thermopile-based pyranometer. The I–V curves were
170 determined by digital source meters without any external bias. The electrical data were averaged
171 over three samples in each case, which also allowed to check the result reproducibility.

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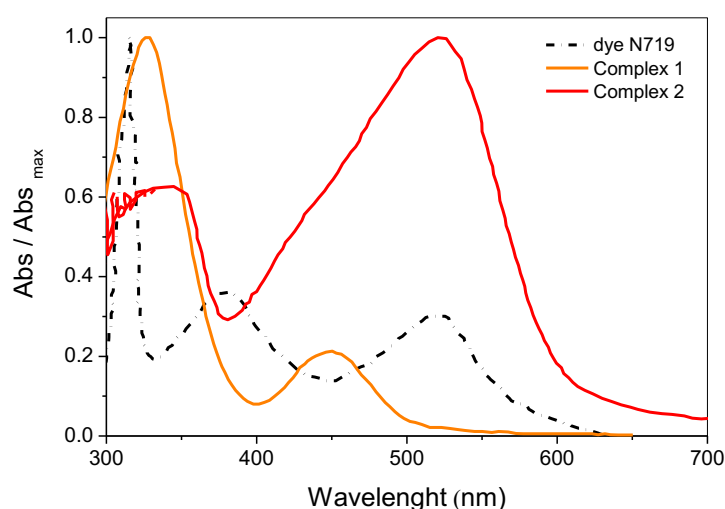
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174 3. Results and Discussion

175 3.1. UV-visible properties

176 The UV-vis absorption spectra were recorded using a high resolution diode array
 177 spectrophotometer (HR4000, Ocean Optics). Figure 2 plots the normalized absorption vs wavelength
 178 of the ruthenium complexes, including the well-known spectrum of N719 in ethanol. The electronic
 179 spectrum of complex 1 in water is characterized by a strong absorption peak at 326 nm and a smaller
 180 peak at 448 nm; the absorption coefficient was $\epsilon_{\max} \approx 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$. On the other hand, complex 2 in
 181 chloroform displays a peak at 338 nm and a broad and intense absorption band in the visible range,
 182 with the maximum located at 520 nm. This band perfectly matches with one absorption peaks of the
 183 dye N719, but it is much stronger for the complex 2. Furthermore, the first peak of both dyes appears
 184 at similar wavelengths than the corresponding to the maximum absorption of N719 (315 nm).

185 The electronic properties of the ruthenium complexes arise from ligand-centered charge transfer
 186 transitions (LCCT), as well as metal-to-ligand charge transfer transitions (MLCT). The absorption
 187 peaks at higher wavelengths (visible range) arise from the MLCT transitions, while the more
 188 energetically demanding LCCT transitions give rise to the absorption in the UV region [34]. In
 189 general, the novel ruthenium complexes show absorption properties similar to that of complex N719,
 190 with strong absorption bands covering a wider range of the spectrum. To be effective, a dye must be
 191 excited over a wide range of wavelengths in addition to present a high absorption coefficient. In view
 192 of these results, the ruthenium complexes seem to meet the requirements to be sensitizers for DSCs.
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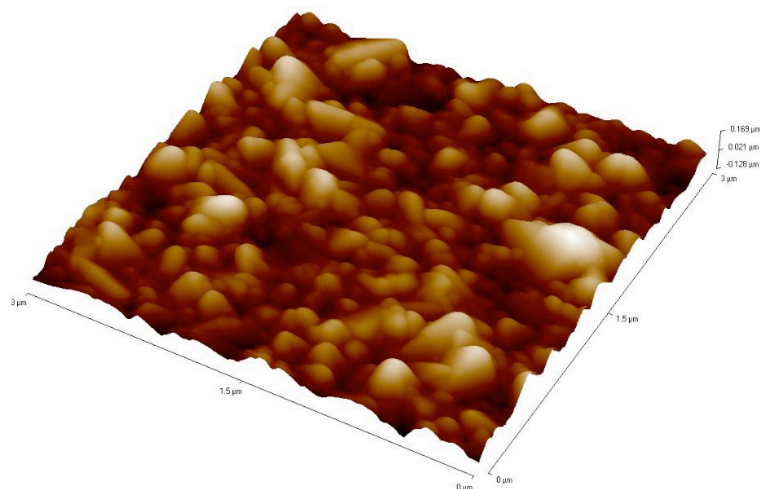
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195 **Figure 2.** UV-visible absorption spectra of the ruthenium complexes; N719 was prepared in ethanol
 196 at 3.10^{-4} M , complex 1 in H_2O at 3.10^{-2} M , and complex 2 in chloroform at 3.10^{-3} M .

197 3.2. Morphology of the Pt electrode

198 Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM) was used to characterize the morphology, topography and
 199 roughness of the counter electrode as these parameters strongly affect to the solar cell performance.
 200 Figure 3 shows an AFM image of the surface of the Pt film deposited on the FTO substrate. The image
 201 was taken with a microscope Veeco Innova (model 840-012-711) in tapping mode by scanning an area
 202 of $3 \mu\text{m} \times 3 \mu\text{m}$ with 1024 lines resolution at a scan rate of $0.6 \mu\text{m/s}$. The image shows a highly textured
 203 Pt electrode with a surface roughness of 32.3 nm. For the scanned surface ($9.0 \mu\text{m}^2$) the resulting
 204 surface area was $12.60 \mu\text{m}^2$ (surface/area ratio = 1.4). Our results are very similar to the obtained by
 205 Tsai and coworkers [35]. These authors found the best solar cell performance for platinized electrodes
 206 with roughness = 28.3 nm and surface/area ratio = 1.17. This confirms that our deposition method
 207 optimizes the morphology of the Pt counter electrode. The resulting high roughness and surface area
 208 enhances the catalytic ability of the electrode for I_3^- ions reduction and the charge exchange at the

209 Pt/electrolyte interface. As a result, the conversion efficiency of solar cell is expected to enhance by
 210 10% respect to other electrode morphologies [35].
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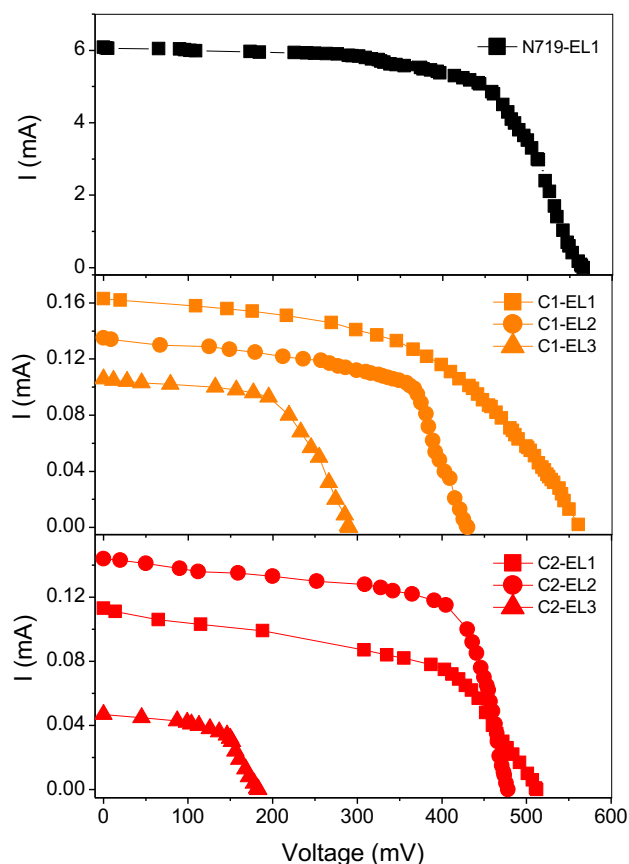


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 213 **Figure 3.** AFM image of the platinumized counter electrode. Scan was performed in tapping mode at
 214 $0.6 \mu\text{m/s}$ covering an area of $3 \mu\text{m} \times 3 \mu\text{m}$.

215 3.3. Solar cell performance

216 The manufactured cells are named as Cx-ELy, being x, y the numbers of the complex (C) and
 217 electrolyte (EL), respectively. Three electrolytes with the following compositions were used: EL1:
 218 0.05 M I_2 , 0.5 M LiI , $0.5 \text{ M 4-tert-butylpyridine (TBP)}$ in 3-methoxypropionitrile; EL2: 0.05 M I_2 , 0.5 M
 219 LiI in 3-methoxypropionitril; EL3: 1.0 M PMII , 0.5 M NMBI , 0.1 M GNCS in 3-methoxypropionitrile.
 220 Electrolytes 1, 2 are based on the iodide/triiodide redox couple because it is considered one of the
 221 most efficient charge mediator [30]. Electrolyte 3 is a liquid ionic composed of imidazolium salts as a
 222 source of iodide and it is widely used because of their improved chemical and thermal stability, which
 223 is a key requirement for long-lived DSCs [36]. For each combination of complex-electrolyte, at least
 224 three solar cells were fabricated in order to confirm the reproducibility of the results.

225 Figure 4 shows average photocurrent–V curves of the DSCs fabricated with each one of the
 226 ruthenium complexes. The curves allow to access the electrical parameters: open circuit voltage, V_{oc} ;
 227 short circuit current, I_{sc} ; fill factor, FF; and overall efficiency, η , which represents the percentage
 228 amount of solar light converted in electrical output. These parameters are obtained averaging
 229 measures from at least three DSCs and summarized in Table 1. For comparison, a reference cell
 230 is made with the dye N719 and electrolyte 1 (N719-E1). The reference cell yields an efficiency close to
 231 11%, as expected according to previous works [33,37]; this result validates our manufacturing process
 232 of the solar cells.
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Figure 4. I-V curves for dye-sensitized solar cells made with different dyes: a) N719; (b) Complex 1; c) Complex 2. The cells are characterized using electrolytes 1-3.

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The DSCs prepared with the complex $[\text{RuCl}_2(\text{mPTA})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})](\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_3)_3$ and electrolyte 1 (C1-EL1) present a $V_{\text{oc}}=550$ mV, very similar to the value obtained for N719, but a significant lower short circuit current, $I_{\text{sc}}=0.160$ mA. This leads to an overall conversion efficiency $\eta = 0.32$ %, which is the best performance achieved with complex 1. These photochemical parameters worsen when complex 1 works in combination with electrolyte 2 (C1-EL2): $V_{\text{oc}} = 396$ mV, $I_{\text{sc}} = 0.136$ mA, $\eta = 0.238$ %. The improved performance attained with electrolyte 1 is due to the presence of 4-*tert*-butylpyridine (TBP) affecting the semiconductor-electrolyte interface. It is known that this additive deprotonates the TiO_2 surface by absorption, consequently shifting the conduction band of the semiconductor toward negative potentials [38]. The recombination of the photo-injected electrons and the redox mediator is then reduced. Consequently, the open-circuit potential and thus the overall efficiency of C1-EL1 are improved [39]. With the ionic liquid as electrolyte, the solar cells (C1-EL3) result in even lower photochemical parameters, being $V_{\text{oc}} = 256$ mV, $I_{\text{sc}} = 0.099$ mA, and $\eta = 0.105$ %. In this case, the high viscosity of the electrolyte limits the diffusion of the redox mediator and the dye regeneration is therefore not as good as for iodide/triiodide redox couple. This ultimately diminishes the solar cell performance [40], as it is observed in our experiments.

The solar cells sensitized with the complex $[\text{Ru}(\text{C}=\text{C}=\text{CPh}_2)\text{Cp}(\text{PTA})(\text{PPh}_3)](\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_3)$ exhibited similar performance than complex 1. The characteristic parameters obtained with electrolyte 1 (C2-EL1) became worse: $V_{\text{oc}} = 510$ mV, $I_{\text{sc}} = 0.110$ mA, $\eta = 0.209$ %. Interestingly, the performance improves when using the electrolyte 2 (C2-EL2): $V_{\text{oc}} = 492$ mV, $I_{\text{sc}} = 0.143$ mA, $\eta = 0.330$ %. The presence of TBP in this case does not improve the efficiency since it reacts through the nitrogen atom with the allenylidene ligand, thus degrading the complex. After the solar exposure, the solar cells changed their characteristic red color (see Figure 1, right) to dark yellow, revealing the nature of this reaction. Despite this disadvantage, the cells C2-EL2 continued working but with a concomitant performance loss. Finally, the cell performance with the ionic liquid electrolyte was poor, yielding an efficiency $\eta = 0.028$ %. The reduction in the dye regeneration, in combination with the reactivity of

262 complex 2 with the nucleophiles of the ionic liquid explain the bad operation of C3-EL3 cells. The
 263 reaction of the allenylideneruthenium complex with N-based nucleophiles has been reported
 264 elsewhere and support this result [28].

265 **Table 1.** Electrical parameters of the DSCs fabricated with the ruthenium complexes (C1, C2) in
 266 combination with different electrolytes (EL1-EL3). N719-EL1 stands for the reference cell.

Solar cell	V _{oc} (mV)	I _{sc} (mA)	FF	Efficiency, η (%)
N719-E1	568 ± 1	5.960 ± 0.001	0.63 ± 0.03	10.9 ± 0.6
CI-EL1	550 ± 1	0.160 ± 0.001	0.529 ± 0.011	0.320 ± 0.011
CI-EL2	396 ± 1	0.136 ± 0.001	0.623 ± 0.013	0.238 ± 0.024
CI-EL3	256 ± 1	0.099 ± 0.001	0.575 ± 0.015	0.105 ± 0.024
CII-EL1	510 ± 1	0.110 ± 0.001	0.528 ± 0.006	0.209 ± 0.003
CII-EL2	492 ± 1	0.143 ± 0.001	0.662 ± 0.015	0.330 ± 0.003
CII-EL3	180 ± 1	0.044 ± 0.001	0.50 ± 0.04	0.028 ± 0.004

Comparing the electrical parameters of the different DSCs, fill factors were similar in all cases. Regarding V_{oc} and I_{sc}, the best results were obtained with the iodide/triiodide redox couple. This must be related with the nature of the ruthenium complex and the counter-ions, which make the dye regeneration to be diffusion-limited by the electrolyte viscosity. The highest efficiencies are attained for cells C1-EL1 and C2-EL2, emphasizing the importance of N-based additives, such as TBP, in the cell performance. It is important to note that complex 2 reacts with TPB resulting in smaller photochemical parameters. Overall, the values of the conversion efficiency obtained with the ruthenium complexes are low, despite their good absorption characteristics in the UV-vis. The major drawback seems to be the nature of the ligands that define the HOMO-LUMO energy levels, and then the electron injection controlling the overall performance. More studies are in progress with the aim of further improving the sensitizing properties of these PTA-based ruthenium complexes though a proper design of the ligands.

267 5. Conclusions

268 We synthesize two novel ruthenium complexes bearing PTA ligands and use them as
 269 photosensitizers in fully operating dye-sensitized solar cells: [RuCl₂(mPTA)₃(H₂O)](CF₃SO₃)₃ and
 270 [Ru(C=C=CPh₂)Cp(PTA)(PPh₃)](CF₃SO₃). The presence of PTA ligands makes the complexes soluble
 271 in aqueous solvents, which is very interesting for water-based photochemistry. They exhibit excellent
 272 absorption properties over a wide range of the spectrum. Complex 1 is characterized by strong
 273 absorption peaks at 326 nm and 448 nm, whereas complex 2 displays a peak at 338 nm and a broad
 274 and intense absorption band located at 520 nm, similarly to dye N719.

275 The performance of DSCs containing the complexes, in combination with three types of
 276 electrolyte, is evaluated in comparison with the standard N719. The electrochemical behavior found
 277 was similar for both complexes with a strong dependence on the type of the electrolyte. The best
 278 performance ($\eta \approx 0.33\%$) was achieved when using the iodide/triiodide redox mediator. Particularly,
 279 complex 2 reacted with the additive 4-tert-butylpyridine (electrolyte 2) reducing the photon-to-light
 280 conversion efficiency. The performance of the DSCs was poor compared to the N719 in all cases.
 281 Nevertheless, the results demonstrate that ruthenium complexes sensitize the solar cell producing
 282 electricity from sunlight while they possess thermal and chemical stability under irradiation.

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291 **Author Contributions:** A. Romerosa and A. Fernandez conceived and designed greater part of the experiments.
292 M. Serrano synthesized and characterized the ruthenium complexes. A. Maldonado performed most of the
293 experiments, including AFM and the electrical measurements of the solar cells. B. Sierra analyzed the data and
294 wrote the paper. All the authors contributed equally to the discussion of the data.

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