

TeO₂-ZnO-La₂O₃ glass composition for mid-infrared wavelengths generation and transmission in optical fibers

Joris Lousteau^a, Walter Belardi^b, Diego Pugliese^c, Nadia G. Boetti^d and Daniel Milanese^{e*}

^aPolitecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Chimica, Materiali e Ingegneria Chimica (CMIC) "Giulio Natta", Via Mancinelli 7, 20131 Milano, Italy

^bUniversité de Lille, Department of Physics, 42 Rue Paul Duez, 59000 Lille, France

^cPolitecnico di Torino, Dipartimento di Scienza Applicata e Tecnologia (DISAT) and RU INSTM, Corso Duca degli Abruzzi 24, 10129 Torino, Italy

^dFondazione LINKS – Leading Innovation and Knowledge for Society, Via P. C. Boggio 61, 10138 Torino, Italy

^eUniversità di Parma, Dipartimento di Ingegneria e Architettura (DIA) and RU INSTM, Parco Area delle Scienze 181/A, 43124 Parma, Italy

[*daniel.milanese@unipr.it](mailto:daniel.milanese@unipr.it)

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Numerous applications in the Mid-InfraRed (Mid-IR) wavelength region still require basic optical components such as sources and optical fibers as transmission medium. Thanks to its mid-IR transparency and nonlinearity, tellurite glass allows for developing both these types of components. However, practical applications require materials able to handle high optical intensity through enhanced material damage threshold. We report on the synthesis of a tellurite glass in the TeO₂-ZnO-La₂O₃ (TZL) system which presents enhanced thermo-mechanical properties with respect to typical tellurite glass compositions. We measured for the TZL composition a glass transition of 626 K, hence 70 K higher than the glass transition temperature of “standard” TZN compositions. The coefficient of thermal expansion was measured to be $138 \cdot 10^{-6}/\text{K}$ as compared to typical value of $180 \cdot 10^{-6}/\text{K}$ for TZN glass. We manufactured two types of fibers to assess the prospect for achieving high average power SC sources and Mid-IR transmission in TZL glass fibers. First, a high Numerical Aperture (NA) aperture fiber was developed through standard rod-in tube technique, where the cladding glass tube was manufactured by extrusion. The 50 μm core fiber presents an optical attenuation value of 0.26 dB/m at 1.55 μm . As an intermediate step towards the fabrication of an antiresonant hollow core fiber for high power transmission, we manufactured a preform and drew it into a cane. A TZL glass tube, 120 mm-long and 9 mm/12 mm of inner/outer diameters (ID/OD) was manufactured via rotational casting technique. This latter tube was drawn into a tube of 2 mm in diameter which was cut into sections 130 mm long. Seven of those were stacked in another tellurite glass tube 6.5 mm/12 mm of ID/OD diameters, respectively. This preform was then drawn into a microstructured cane 1.6 mm in diameter which features tubular structures periodically arranged and of uniform thickness.