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# Location of CO<sub>2</sub> during its uptake by the flexible porous metal–organic framework MIL-53(Fe): a high resolution powder X-ray diffraction study†

Nathalie Guillo, <sup>a</sup> Sandrine Bourrelly, <sup>b</sup> Philip L. Llewellyn, <sup>b</sup> Richard I. Walton <sup>\*c</sup> and Franck Millange <sup>\*a</sup>

The interaction of CO<sub>2</sub> with the porous metal–organic framework material MIL-53(Fe), Fe<sup>III</sup>(OH)<sub>0.8</sub>F<sub>0.2</sub>[O<sub>2</sub>C–C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>–CO<sub>2</sub>] has been studied by complementary gas adsorption and high resolution powder X-ray diffraction as a function of gas pressure. It has been shown that CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption occurs in three steps, with firstly the formation of an “Intermediate” (INT) form [S. G. *P1*; *V* = 916.80(6) Å<sup>3</sup>] at room temperature and 2 bar, followed by the transition to a “Narrow Pore” (NP) form [S. G. *C2/c*; *V* = 1083.01(2) Å<sup>3</sup>] at 10 bar. The “Large Pore” (LP) form [S. G. *Imcm*; *V* = 1563.10(4) Å<sup>3</sup>] is obtained also at 10 bar but by decreasing the temperature to 220 K. Crystal structures of the three CO<sub>2</sub> materials MIL-53(Fe)[*n*CO<sub>2</sub>], with *n* = 0.22, 0.63 and 2.72, have been solved and refined, which has allowed precise localisation of guest CO<sub>2</sub> molecules, not previously determined. This shows that the (INT) form presents two types of tunnels of different sizes, with only the largest ones are occupied by the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules. In the (NP) and (LP) forms, all tunnels become equivalent and are occupied by CO<sub>2</sub>. The huge unit cell volume increase of the (LP) form leads to drastic increase in the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> adsorbed. In the three forms, CO<sub>2</sub> molecules are located in order to favour interactions between their oxygen atoms and the OH/F groups of the framework and there is no evidence for guest–guest interactions until the highest loading where short contacts of a similar distance found in solid CO<sub>2</sub> are observed.

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## 1. Introduction

Porous metal organic frameworks (MOFs) are presently attracting much attention for applications as adsorbents for a variety of guest molecules, in particular for molecular separation and storage of gases such as CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> for environmental and energy reasons, but also of much larger molecules, typically encountered in the liquid phase, ranging from simple hydrocarbons to complex drug molecules.<sup>1</sup> In terms of CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption the goal of this research is often the capture and storage of large volumes of the gas at close to ambient conditions. In real situations CO<sub>2</sub> must often be captured in competition with other potential adsorbate molecules, such as water, sulfur and nitrogen oxides or hydrocarbons, for example, where combustion exhaust gases are being processed. Recent progress in CO<sub>2</sub> capture by MOFs has been

the subject of several extensive review articles,<sup>2</sup> to which the reader is referred. It is clear from this work that diverse methods are being explored to optimise CO<sub>2</sub> binding in MOFs, such as inclusion of open metal sites,<sup>3</sup> engineering of ligand defects,<sup>4</sup> post synthesis partial exchange of metal ions,<sup>5</sup> in addition to the use of constricted pores (molecular sieving) familiar from zeolite science.<sup>6</sup>

One interesting strategy in the field of adsorption by porous MOFs is to make use of so-called breathing frameworks whose structure is able to respond to an external stimulus whilst overall connectivity of the structure is maintained.<sup>7,8</sup> Such materials have adaptable porosity depending on gas pressure and temperature, for example, which may allow the development of smart porous materials whose structure can respond to conditions of use. Materials with the MIL-53 structure are among the most well-studied examples of breathing MOFs: the structure undergoes a large and reversible structural swelling depending on the presence or absence of guest molecules, an effect which may also be brought about by temperature or pressure.<sup>8,9</sup> MIL-53 materials have an anisotropic, three-dimensional structure, being constructed from infinite inorganic chains (*trans*-corner shared M<sup>3+</sup>-centred octahedra), cross-linked in two dimensions by the bidentate 1,4-benzenedicarboxylate ligand to give

<sup>a</sup> Institut Lavoisier Versailles, Université de Versailles, UMR 8180, 78035 Versailles, France. E-mail: franck.millange@uvsq.fr

<sup>b</sup> Aix-Marseille University, Laboratoire MADIREL, UMR CNRS 7246, Centre de St Jérôme, 13397 Marseille Cedex 20, France

<sup>c</sup> Department of Chemistry, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK. E-mail: r.i.walton@warwick.ac.uk

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**Table 1** Unit cell data and goodness of fit parameters for the MIL-53(Fe)[*n*CO<sub>2</sub>] materials studied resulting from the Rietveld refinements

	“Intermediate” (INT) MIL-53(Fe)[0.22CO <sub>2</sub> ]	“Narrow Pore” (NP) MIL-53(Fe)[0.63CO <sub>2</sub> ]	“Large Pore” (LP) MIL-53(Fe)[2.72CO <sub>2</sub> ]
$n_{\max}$	0.25	1	3
S. G.	$P\bar{1}$	$C2/c$	$Imcm$
$a/\text{\AA}$	6.8722(2)	20.8595(2)	16.5679(2)
$b/\text{\AA}$	11.1022(4)	8.2508(1)	13.6384(3)
$c/\text{\AA}$	13.9274(4)	6.8738(1)	6.91760(5)
$\alpha/^\circ$	108.314(2)	—	—
$\beta/^\circ$	92.603(3)	113.7310(8)	—
$\gamma/^\circ$	112.299(4)	—	—
$V/\text{\AA}^3$	916.80(6)	1083.01(2)	1563.10(4)
$Z$	4	4	4
$M_{20}$	42	172	166
$N_{\text{ref}}$	1721	517	432
Structural parameters	45	19	19
$R_B$	0.031	0.042	0.070
$R_{\text{WP}}, R_P$	0.078, 0.059	0.088, 0.062	0.104, 0.072

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption and microcalorimetry

The behaviour of MIL-53(Fe) towards carbon dioxide was probed under various conditions of temperature and pressure (see Fig. 1 and 2). The isotherms show two general plateau regions. A first plateau is observed for an uptake of around 1.3 mmol g<sup>−1</sup> ( $\approx 0.3 \text{ mol}_{\text{CO}_2}/\text{mol}_{\text{MIL-53(Fe)}}$ ) whose length depends on the temperature region explored. Indeed, at 195 K this region seems to be a shoulder in the isotherm whereas this plateau is stable in the region 0.05–0.3 bar at 230 K and in the region 0.1–4.5 bars at 303 K. This is then followed by a second step and ‘plateau’ which is seen to vary in the region 3.2 ( $\approx 0.8 \text{ mol}_{\text{CO}_2}/\text{mol}_{\text{MIL-53(Fe)}}$ ) to almost 4 mmol g<sup>−1</sup> ( $\approx 1 \text{ mol}_{\text{CO}_2}/\text{mol}_{\text{MIL-53(Fe)}}$ ) depending on temperature and pressure. A Van’t Hoff plot following the position of this step with pressure (see Fig. 1b) shows a straight line region whose slope can be used to deduce energy. Here, this energy is estimated at 19 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup>, which compares well to the experimentally observed enthalpy of 17 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup> (see below). The amount adsorbed after this second step corresponds well to the uptake observed in the NP structures of MIL-53(Al) and MIL-53(Cr).<sup>20</sup> In the high pressure experiment, an upswing in the isotherm can be observed which suggests the formation of a third plateau. However with the equipment at our disposition it was not possible to reach higher pressures.

The adsorption enthalpies are shown in Fig. 2b. Two main enthalpy regions can be distinguished which can be associated with the two filling regimes. For the first filling region, an enthalpy of around 42 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup> is measured; however enthalpies in the region of the enthalpy of liquefaction (17 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup>) are measured during the second filling step. It is interesting to compare these results with those previously obtained with the MIL-53(Cr) and MIL-53(Al) structures.<sup>20,21</sup> Indeed, the energies of adsorption in the NP form of these structures is estimated in the region of 41 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup> in the aluminium solid and 45 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup> in the chromium solid. In this

work, such energies are associated with the filling of the INT structure (see below), in which half of the pores have the same opening as the NP form. Interesting though, lower energies are associated with the filling of the NP structure of MIL-53(Fe) (17 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup>) and this is more probably associated with the energy equally required to transform the structures from the INT to NP form. This behaviour is observed during the NP → LP transition in both MIL-53(Al) and MIL-53(Cr) and was again associated with the energy required for the structural transition.

#### 3.2. CO<sub>2</sub> localization by X-ray powder diffraction

As previously observed,<sup>11</sup> the host MIL-53(Fe) undergoes structural swelling depending on the applied CO<sub>2</sub> pressure. Starting from the “Closed Pore” (CP) form, three different phases can be observed (see Fig. 3). At room temperature and a pressure around 2 bar, corresponding to the middle of the first plateau seen in the adsorption isotherm, the “Intermediate” (INT) form was isolated. When reaching 10 bar at room temperature, a “Narrow Pore” (NP) form of the MIL-53(Fe)[*n*CO<sub>2</sub>] can be obtained, while maintaining the pressure at 10 bar and decreasing the temperature down to 220 K, the fully open “Large Pore” (LP) form was successfully isolated. Indexing of the three powder patterns [(INT), (NP) and (LP)] shows similarities with the unit cells previously reported for MIL-53(Fe)\_int,<sup>22</sup> MIL-53(Fe)[H<sub>2</sub>O] (ref. 23) and MIL-53(Fe)[2,6-lutidine,H<sub>2</sub>O].<sup>14</sup> That led us to use directly the atomic coordinates of the frameworks of these three MIL-53 materials as starting models in the Rietveld refinements of the CO<sub>2</sub>-loaded structures. At this stage,  $R_B$  and  $R_{\text{WP}}$  factors reached the following values for the (INT), (NP) and (LP) forms, respectively ( $R_B = 0.058/R_{\text{WP}} = 0.109$ ,  $R_B = 0.051/R_{\text{WP}} = 0.096$  and  $R_B = 0.158/R_{\text{WP}} = 0.191$ ). The CO<sub>2</sub> guest molecules were then localised by both difference Fourier map calculations and a direct space approach based on simulated annealing. During Rietveld refinements, 1,4-benzenedicarboxylate ions were treated as rigid bodies along with the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules. The anisotropic line broadening effect was modelled by using





Fig. 1 Adsorption of CO<sub>2</sub> on MIL-53(Fe) to 1 bar. (a) Isotherms to 1 bar at 195 K, 230 K and 303 K. (b) Van't Hoff plot.

spherical harmonics series. The final Rietveld refinements gave satisfactory crystal structure model indicators and profile factors (see Table 1). It should be noticed that the (LP) form was not obtained as a pure phase under the working conditions ( $T = 220 \text{ K}$ ,  $P = 10 \text{ bars}$ ) since this one coexists with the (NP) form, whose amount was estimated (from quantitative analysis using the Rietveld method) at only 2.56(4)% in weight. The thermal factor of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules was arbitrarily fixed to  $4 \text{ \AA}^2$  in the three structural models and it is clear that the errors on occupancy factors of guest molecules are underestimated. For the three filling states, the CO<sub>2</sub>/Fe ratio was refined and converged to a value of 0.22, 0.63 and 2.72 for the (INT), (NP) and (LP) form, respectively. The corresponding chemical formulae are therefore Fe<sup>III</sup>(OH)<sub>0.8</sub>F<sub>0.2</sub>[O<sub>2</sub>C-C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>-CO<sub>2</sub>] $\cdot$ 0.22CO<sub>2</sub> for (INT), Fe<sup>III</sup>(OH)<sub>0.8</sub>F<sub>0.2</sub>[O<sub>2</sub>C-C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>-CO<sub>2</sub>] $\cdot$ 0.63CO<sub>2</sub> for (NP) and Fe<sup>III</sup>(OH)<sub>0.8</sub>F<sub>0.2</sub>[O<sub>2</sub>C-C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>-CO<sub>2</sub>] $\cdot$ 2.72CO<sub>2</sub> for (LP). These are

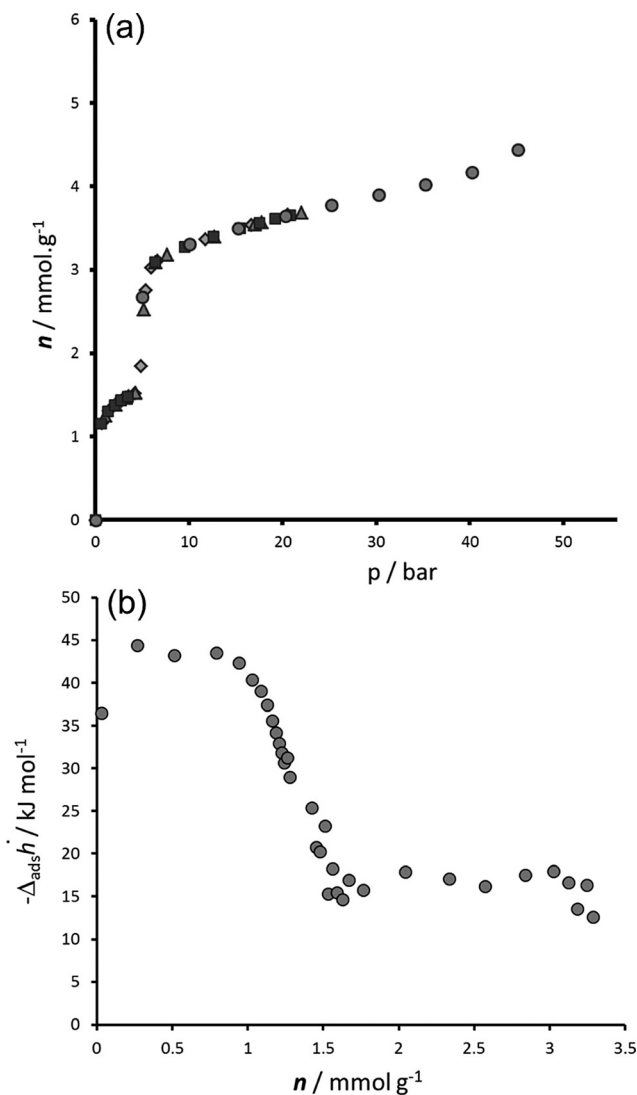


Fig. 2 Adsorption of CO<sub>2</sub> on MIL-53(Fe) at 303 K. (a) Isotherm repeated 5 times. (b) Enthalpies measured by calorimetry.

written below using the notation MIL-53(Fe)[ $n\text{CO}_2$ ] to be consistent with our earlier notation of MIL-53(M)[guest] materials.<sup>14</sup>

The filling of the pores by the CO<sub>2</sub> guest molecules leads to three different structures depending on pressure, for which the topology of the MOF skeleton is identical. The (INT) form crystallises in a triclinic unit cell (see Table 1). The crystallographic asymmetric unit contains two independent iron atoms and two OH/F groups on general positions, three carboxylate moieties [two on symmetry centres and one on general position] and one CO<sub>2</sub> molecule also localised on a symmetry centre [occupancy of 0.881(6)]. As already observed in the metastable phase MIL-53(Fe)\_int obtained during the dehydration of the MIL-53(Fe)[H<sub>2</sub>O],<sup>22</sup> has two sets of tunnels with different sizes (described using the  $P\bar{1}$  space group). The structure can be conveniently described in terms of iron-iron distances. Along the small diagonal of the largest lozenge ( $c$ -axis), the distances between two nearest





Fig. 3 Adsorption of CO<sub>2</sub> on MIL-53(Fe) followed by X-ray powder diffraction. Four different phases can be identified depending on the pressure and/or temperature (anhydrous CP, INT, NP and LP forms).

iron(III) cations increase significantly from Fe<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub> = 7.762 Å and Fe<sub>1</sub>–Fe<sub>1</sub> = 7.499 Å in MIL-53(Fe)<sub>int</sub> to Fe<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub> = 8.127 Å and Fe<sub>1</sub>–Fe<sub>1</sub> = 8.109 Å in the (INT) form, while the in the smallest lozenge, there are nearly no changes (Fe<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub> = 5.723 Å and Fe<sub>1</sub>–Fe<sub>1</sub> = 5.993 Å in MIL-53(Fe)<sub>int</sub> to Fe<sub>2</sub>–Fe<sub>2</sub> = 5.847 Å and Fe<sub>1</sub>–Fe<sub>1</sub> = 5.846 Å in the (INT) form). It is obvious that the smallest tunnels remain empty during the first stage of CO<sub>2</sub> uptake, and that the guests can only lie in half of the channels, the largest ones (see Fig. 4). The difference Fourier map calculations reveal unambiguously the exact position of the CO<sub>2</sub> molecule located at the centre of the largest pores, whereas no electron density was observed in the smallest ones. Analysis of the position of the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules led us to understand the nature of the host–guest and guest–guest interactions. Contrary to what has been observed in MIL-53(Sc)-int in which the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules are aligned with the long diagonal of the rhombic cross section of the

channel,<sup>13</sup> in our case the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules are stacked along the *a*-axis in such a way that they are (i) almost parallel to each other and (ii) nearly parallel to the inorganic chains. However, a small tilt of the CO<sub>2</sub> molecule with the inorganic chain is observed in order to favour interactions between the oxygen atom (O<sub>3</sub>) of the guest molecule and the OH/F group (O<sub>1</sub>) of the two opposite inorganic chains in the direction of the small diagonal of the lozenge with a distance  $d(\text{O}_3 \cdots \text{O}_1) = 2.83(2)$  Å. All hydroxyl groups of the filled tunnels are then involved in hydrogen bonding with the guest molecule but there is no interaction between the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules themselves  $d(\text{O}_3 \cdots \text{O}_3) = 4.793(3)$  Å.

The (NP) form crystallises in a monoclinic unit cell (see Table 1). The crystallographic asymmetric unit contains one independent iron atom (on a symmetry centre), one OH/F group (on the twofold axis) and one carboxylate moiety (also on a symmetry centre). The disordered CO<sub>2</sub> molecule was localised on general position with occupancy of 0.313(2). Contrary to the (INT) form, all of the tunnels are equivalent and now filled by the CO<sub>2</sub> guest molecule at the centre of the pores. Along the small diagonal of the largest lozenge (*b*-axis), the distance between two nearest iron(III) cations is Fe–Fe = 8.251 Å in the (NP) form (see Fig. 5). This distance is close to that previously observed in the largest filled tunnel in the (INT) form and much larger than the one seen in MIL-53(Fe)[H<sub>2</sub>O] (Fe–Fe = 7.643 Å) as expected taking into account the kinetic diameter of both different guest molecules.<sup>23</sup> In this (NP) form, the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules are closely aligned with the long diagonal of the rhombic cross section of the channels and stacked along the *c*-axis in such a way that they are (i) almost parallel to each other and (ii) nearly perpendicular to the inorganic chains. This stacking seen in the (NP) form is in closed agreement with the one found from *ab initio* molecular dynamics simulations for MIL-53(Sc)-int, even if only half the pores were filled by CO<sub>2</sub> in that case.<sup>13</sup> Half of the OH/F groups (O<sub>1</sub>) now interact with only one oxygen atom of the CO<sub>2</sub> guest molecule (O<sub>3</sub>) with a distance  $d(\text{O}_3 \cdots \text{O}_1) = 2.923(4)$  Å. Like in the (INT) form, no guest–guest



Fig. 4 Two views of the structure of MIL-53(Fe)[0.22CO<sub>2</sub>] (top left) in the *bc* plane showing stacked CO<sub>2</sub> molecules within the largest lozenge-shaped channels and (bottom left) view of the filled single channel in the almost perpendicular direction. Final Rietveld plot (right) for MIL-53(Fe)[0.22CO<sub>2</sub>] from X-ray powder diffraction data measured at room temperature and 2 bar. Black points correspond to experimental data and the red line to the calculated ones; the black line is the difference curve and the tickmarks indicate Bragg peak positions.

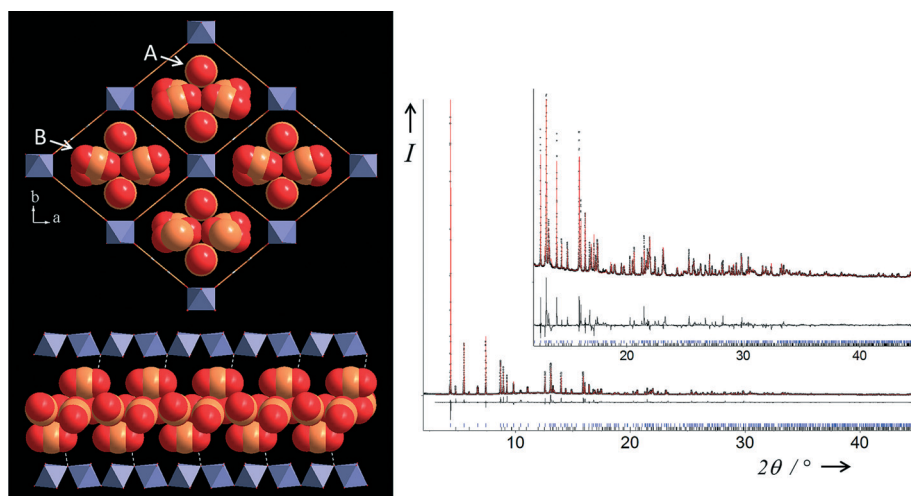


**Fig. 5** Two views of the structure of MIL-53(Fe)[0.63CO<sub>2</sub>] (top left) in the *ab* plane showing stacked CO<sub>2</sub> molecules within all the lozenge-shaped channels and (bottom left) view of a single channel in the almost perpendicular direction. Final Rietveld plot (right) for MIL-53(Fe)[0.63CO<sub>2</sub>] from X-ray powder diffraction data measured at RT and 10 bar. Legend as Fig. 4.

interactions can be identified with the closest distance  $d(\text{O}_3 \cdots \text{O}_3) = 4.659(1) \text{ \AA}$ .

The (LP) form crystallises in an orthorhombic unit cell (see Table 1). The crystallographic asymmetric unit contains one independent iron atom sited on the  $4d$  Wyckoff position, one OH/F group ( $4e$ ) and one carboxylate moiety (centred on  $4b$ ) and two disordered independent CO<sub>2</sub> molecules, the first one being centred on  $8h$  (occupancy of 0.5) and the second one on general position [occupancy of 0.430(2)]. In that form, a huge increase of the small diagonal of the lozenge has been observed (Fe–Fe = 13.638 Å) suggesting drastic changes in the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> inside the pores in comparison with the two previous forms (see Fig. 6). This is reminiscent of both the structure of the superhydrated chromium form MIL-53(Cr)[6.2H<sub>2</sub>O] (Fe–Fe = 15.245 Å)<sup>24</sup> and the structure of the MIL-53(Fe)[2,6-lutidine,H<sub>2</sub>O] (Fe–Fe = 14.392 Å).<sup>14</sup> In the (LP) form, the two CO<sub>2</sub> molecules are no longer localised at the centre of the pores: the first type (named A) are now located

either side of the large diagonal of the lozenge, while the second type (named B) are sited either side of the small diagonal, which leads to a split of all CO<sub>2</sub> sites. This can explain the  $n_{\text{max}}$  value (see Table 1) corresponding to the maximum quantity of CO<sub>2</sub> able to fit in each MIL-53(Fe)[ $n$ CO<sub>2</sub>]. Indeed, knowing that the  $n_{\text{max}}$  values for the two corresponding (INT) and (NP) forms are 0.25 and 1 respectively, and taking into account that (i) all channels are filled and (ii) all CO<sub>2</sub> sites are split in the (LP) form, this leads to a  $n_{\text{max}}$  value of 3 ( $2 \times 2 \times 0.25 + 2 \times 1$ ) for this latter form. The A molecules adopt almost the same orientation as in the (INT) form: they are stacked along the inorganic chains (*c*-axis) and parallel to these chains, and they are strictly parallel to each other. The B molecules adopt almost the same orientation as in the (NP) form: they are mostly aligned with the long diagonal of the rhombic cross section of the channel and stacked along the *c*-axis in such a way that (i) the torsion angle between two adjacent CO<sub>2</sub> molecules is about 30° and that they are (ii)



**Fig. 6** Two views of the structure of MIL-53(Fe)[2.72CO<sub>2</sub>] (top left) in the *ab* plane showing stacked CO<sub>2</sub> molecules (two types, labelled A and B) within all the lozenge-shaped channels and (bottom left) view of a single channel in the almost perpendicular direction. Final Rietveld plot (right) for MIL-53(Fe)[2.72CO<sub>2</sub>] from X-ray powder diffraction data measured at 220 K and 10 bar. Legend as Fig. 4. The blue tickmarks (upper) indicate Bragg peak positions of the LP form (97.44(4)% weight) and the black ones (lower) those of the NP form observed as an impurity (2.56(4)% weight).

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