

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
29 May 2008 (29.05.2008)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2008/063305 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification: **Not classified**
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/US2007/021693
- (22) International Filing Date: 11 October 2007 (11.10.2007)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
11/591,668 2 November 2006 (02.11.2006) US
11/790,812 27 April 2007 (27.04.2007) US
11/898,641 13 September 2007 (13.09.2007) US
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- (81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:**
— without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report

(54) Title: FRONT ELECTRODE FOR USE IN PHOTOVOLTAIC DEVICE AND METHOD OF MAKING SAME

(57) Abstract: This invention relates to a front electrode/contact for use in an electronic device such as a photovoltaic device. In certain example embodiments, the front electrode of a photovoltaic device or the like includes a multilayer coating including at least one transparent conductive oxide (TCO) layer (e.g., of or including a material such as tin oxide, ITO, zinc oxide, or the like) and/or at least one conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer (e.g., based on silver, gold, or the like). In certain example instances, the multilayer front electrode coating may include one or more conductive metal(s) oxide layer(s) and one or more conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer(s) in order to provide for reduced visible light reflection, increased conductivity, cheaper manufacturability, and/or increased infrared (IR) reflection capability.



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TITLE OF THE INVENTION

FRONT ELECTRODE FOR USE IN PHOTOVOLTAIC DEVICE AND
METHOD OF MAKING SAME

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part (CIP) of U.S. Serial Nos. 11/591,668, filed November 2, 2006, and 11/790,812, filed April 27, 2007, the entire disclosures of which are all hereby incorporated herein by reference.

[0002] This invention relates to a photovoltaic device including an electrode such as a front electrode/contact. In certain example embodiments, the front electrode of the photovoltaic device includes a multi-layer coating having at least one infrared (IR) reflecting and conductive substantially metallic layer of or including silver, gold, or the like, and possibly at least one transparent conductive oxide (TCO) layer (e.g., of or including a material such as tin oxide, zinc oxide, or the like). In certain example embodiments, the multilayer front electrode coating is designed to realize one or more of the following advantageous features: (a) reduced sheet resistance and thus increased conductivity and improved overall photovoltaic module output power; (b) increased reflection of infrared (IR) radiation thereby reducing the operating temperature of the photovoltaic module so as to increase module output power; (c) reduced reflection and/or increased transmission of light in the region of from about 450-700 nm, and/or 450-600 nm, which leads to increased photovoltaic module output power; (d) reduced total thickness of the front electrode coating which can reduce fabrication costs and/or time; and/or (e) improved or enlarged process window in forming the TCO layer(s) because of the reduced impact of the TCO's conductivity on the overall electric properties of the module given the presence of the highly conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer(s).

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS OF
INVENTION

[0003] Photovoltaic devices are known in the art (e.g., see U.S. Patent Nos. 6,784,361, 6,288,325, 6,613,603, and 6,123,824, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference). Amorphous silicon photovoltaic devices, for example, include a front electrode or contact. Typically, the transparent front

electrode is made of a pyrolytic transparent conductive oxide (TCO) such as zinc oxide or tin oxide formed on a substrate such as a glass substrate. In many instances, the transparent front electrode is formed of a single layer using a method of chemical pyrolysis where precursors are sprayed onto the glass substrate at approximately 400 to 600 degrees C. Typical pyrolytic fluorine-doped tin oxide TCOs as front electrodes may be about 400 nm thick, which provides for a sheet resistance (R_s) of about 15 ohms/square. To achieve high output power, a front electrode having a low sheet resistance and good ohm-contact to the cell top layer, and allowing maximum solar energy in certain desirable ranges into the absorbing semiconductor film, are desired.

[0004] Unfortunately, photovoltaic devices (e.g., solar cells) with only such conventional TCO front electrodes suffer from the following problems.

[0005] First, a pyrolytic fluorine-doped tin oxide TCO about 400 nm thick as the entire front electrode has a sheet resistance (R_s) of about 15 ohms/square which is rather high for the entire front electrode. A lower sheet resistance (and thus better conductivity) would be desired for the front electrode of a photovoltaic device. A lower sheet resistance may be achieved by increasing the thickness of such a TCO, but this will cause transmission of light through the TCO to drop thereby reducing output power of the photovoltaic device.

[0006] Second, conventional TCO front electrodes such as pyrolytic tin oxide allow a significant amount of infrared (IR) radiation to pass therethrough thereby allowing it to reach the semiconductor or absorbing layer(s) of the photovoltaic device. This IR radiation causes heat which increases the operating temperature of the photovoltaic device thereby decreasing the output power thereof.

[0007] Third, conventional TCO front electrodes such as pyrolytic tin oxide tend to reflect a significant amount of light in the region of from about 450-700 nm so that less than about 80% of useful solar energy reaches the semiconductor absorbing layer; this significant reflection of visible light is a waste of energy and leads to reduced photovoltaic module output power. Due to the TCO absorption and reflections of light which occur between the TCO (n about 1.8 to 2.0 at 550 nm) and the thin film semiconductor (n about 3.0 to 4.5), and between the TCO and the glass substrate (n about 1.5), the TCO coated glass at the front of the photovoltaic device

typically allows less than 80% of the useful solar energy impinging upon the device to reach the semiconductor film which converts the light into electric energy.

[0008] Fourth, the rather high total thickness (e.g., 400 nm) of the front electrode in the case of a 400 nm thick tin oxide TCO, leads to high fabrication costs.

[0009] Fifth, the process window for forming a zinc oxide or tin oxide TCO for a front electrode is both small and important. In this respect, even small changes in the process window can adversely affect conductivity of the TCO. When the TCO is the sole conductive layer of the front electrode, such adverse affects can be highly detrimental.

[0010] Thus, it will be appreciated that there exists a need in the art for an improved front electrode for a photovoltaic device that can solve or address one or more of the aforesaid five problems.

[0011] In certain example embodiments of this invention, the front electrode of a photovoltaic device is comprised of a multilayer coating including at least one conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer (e.g., based on silver, gold, or the like), and optionally at least one transparent conductive oxide (TCO) layer (e.g., of or including a material such as tin oxide, zinc oxide, or the like). In certain example instances, the multilayer front electrode coating may include a plurality of TCO layers and/or a plurality of conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers arranged in an alternating manner in order to provide for reduced visible light reflections, increased conductivity, increased IR reflection capability, and so forth.

[0012] In certain example embodiments of this invention, a multilayer front electrode coating may be designed to realize one or more of the following advantageous features: (a) reduced sheet resistance (R_s) and thus increased conductivity and improved overall photovoltaic module output power; (b) increased reflection of infrared (IR) radiation thereby reducing the operating temperature of the photovoltaic module so as to increase module output power; (c) reduced reflection and increased transmission of light in the region(s) of from about 450-700 nm and/or 450-600 nm which leads to increased photovoltaic module output power; (d) reduced total thickness of the front electrode coating which can reduce fabrication costs and/or time; and/or (e) an improved or enlarged process window in forming the TCO layer(s)

because of the reduced impact of the TCO's conductivity on the overall electric properties of the module given the presence of the highly conductive substantially metallic layer(s).

[0013] In certain example embodiments of this invention, there is provided a photovoltaic device comprising: a front glass substrate; a semiconductor film; a substantially transparent front electrode located between at least the front glass substrate and the semiconductor film; wherein the substantially transparent front electrode comprises, moving away from the front glass substrate toward the semiconductor film, at least a first substantially transparent layer that may or may not be conductive, a substantially metallic infrared (IR) reflecting layer comprising silver and/or gold, and a first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film located between at least the IR reflecting layer and the semiconductor film.

[0014] In other example embodiments of this invention, there is provided an electrode adapted for use in an electronic device such as a photovoltaic device including a semiconductor film, the electrode comprising: an electrically conductive and substantially transparent multilayer electrode supported by a glass substrate; wherein the substantially transparent multilayer electrode comprises, moving away from the glass substrate, at least a first substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic infrared (IR) reflecting layer comprising silver and/or gold, and a first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film.

[0015] In other example embodiments, there is provided a photovoltaic device comprising: a glass substrate; a semiconductor film; a substantially transparent electrode located between at least the substrate and the semiconductor film; and wherein the substantially transparent electrode comprises, moving away from the glass substrate toward the semiconductor film, at least a first substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic layer comprising silver, and a first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film located between at least the layer comprising silver and the semiconductor film.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] FIGURE 1 is a cross sectional view of an example photovoltaic device according to an example embodiment of this invention.

[0017] FIGURE 2 is a refractive index (n) versus wavelength (nm) graph illustrating refractive indices (n) of glass, a TCO film, silver thin film, and hydrogenated silicon (in amorphous, micro- or poly-crystalline phase).

[0018] FIGURE 3 is a percent transmission ($T\%$) versus wavelength (nm) graph illustrating transmission spectra into a hydrogenated Si thin film of a photovoltaic device comparing examples of this invention versus a comparative example (TCO reference); this shows that the examples of this invention (Examples 1, 2 and 3) have increased transmission in the approximately 450-700 nm wavelength range and thus increased photovoltaic module output power, compared to the comparative example (TCO reference).

[0019] FIGURE 4 is a percent reflection ($R\%$) versus wavelength (nm) graph illustrating reflection spectra from a hydrogenated Si thin film of a photovoltaic device comparing the examples of this invention (Examples 1, 2 and 3 referred to in Fig. 3) versus a comparative example (TCO reference referred to in Fig. 3); this shows that the example embodiment of this invention have increased reflection in the IR range, thereby reducing the operating temperature of the photovoltaic module so as to increase module output power, compared to the comparative example. Because the same Examples 1-3 and comparative example (TCO reference) are being referred to in Figs. 3 and 4, the same curve identifiers used in Fig. 3 are also used in Fig. 4.

[0020] FIGURE 5 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to Example 1 of this invention.

[0021] FIGURE 6 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to Example 2 of this invention.

[0022] FIGURE 7 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to Example 3 of this invention.

[0023] FIGURE 8 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to another example embodiment of this invention.

[0024] FIGURE 9 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to another example embodiment of this invention.

[0025] FIGURE 10 is a cross sectional view of the photovoltaic device according to another example embodiment of this invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0026] Referring now more particularly to the figures in which like reference numerals refer to like parts/layers in the several views.

[0027] Photovoltaic devices such as solar cells convert solar radiation into usable electrical energy. The energy conversion occurs typically as the result of the photovoltaic effect. Solar radiation (e.g., sunlight) impinging on a photovoltaic device and absorbed by an active region of semiconductor material (e.g., a semiconductor film including one or more semiconductor layers such as a-Si layers, the semiconductor sometimes being called an absorbing layer or film) generates electron-hole pairs in the active region. The electrons and holes may be separated by an electric field of a junction in the photovoltaic device. The separation of the electrons and holes by the junction results in the generation of an electric current and voltage. In certain example embodiments, the electrons flow toward the region of the semiconductor material having n-type conductivity, and holes flow toward the region of the semiconductor having p-type conductivity. Current can flow through an external circuit connecting the n-type region to the p-type region as light continues to generate electron-hole pairs in the photovoltaic device.

[0028] In certain example embodiments, single junction amorphous silicon (a-Si) photovoltaic devices include three semiconductor layers. In particular, a p-layer, an n-layer and an i-layer which is intrinsic. The amorphous silicon film (which may include one or more layers such as p, n and i type layers) may be of hydrogenated amorphous silicon in certain instances, but may also be of or include hydrogenated

amorphous silicon carbon or hydrogenated amorphous silicon germanium, or the like, in certain example embodiments of this invention. For example and without limitation, when a photon of light is absorbed in the i-layer it gives rise to a unit of electrical current (an electron-hole pair). The p and n-layers, which contain charged dopant ions, set up an electric field across the i-layer which draws the electric charge out of the i-layer and sends it to an optional external circuit where it can provide power for electrical components. It is noted that while certain example embodiments of this invention are directed toward amorphous-silicon based photovoltaic devices, this invention is not so limited and may be used in conjunction with other types of photovoltaic devices in certain instances including but not limited to devices including other types of semiconductor material, single or tandem thin-film solar cells, CdS and/or CdTe (including CdS/CdTe) photovoltaic devices, polysilicon and/or microcrystalline Si photovoltaic devices, and the like.

[0029] Fig. 1 is a cross sectional view of a photovoltaic device according to an example embodiment of this invention. The photovoltaic device includes transparent front glass substrate 1 (other suitable material may also be used for the substrate instead of glass in certain instances), optional dielectric layer(s) 2, multilayer front electrode 3, active semiconductor film 5 of or including one or more semiconductor layers (such as pin, pn, pinpin tandem layer stacks, or the like), back electrode/contact 7 which may be of a TCO or a metal, an optional encapsulant 9 or adhesive of a material such as ethyl vinyl acetate (EVA) or the like, and an optional superstrate 11 of a material such as glass. Of course, other layer(s) which are not shown may also be provided in the device. Front glass substrate 1 and/or rear superstrate (substrate) 11 may be made of soda-lime-silica based glass in certain example embodiments of this invention; and it may have low iron content and/or an antireflection coating thereon to optimize transmission in certain example instances. While substrates 1, 11 may be of glass in certain example embodiments of this invention, other materials such as quartz, plastics or the like may instead be used for substrate(s) 1 and/or 11. Moreover, superstrate 11 is optional in certain instances. Glass 1 and/or 11 may or may not be thermally tempered and/or patterned in certain example embodiments of this invention. Additionally, it will be appreciated that the word "on" as used herein

covers both a layer being directly on and indirectly on something, with other layers possibly being located therebetween.

[0030] Dielectric layer(s) 2 may be of any substantially transparent material such as a metal oxide and/or nitride which has a refractive index of from about 1.5 to 2.5, more preferably from about 1.6 to 2.5, more preferably from about 1.6 to 2.2, more preferably from about 1.6 to 2.0, and most preferably from about 1.6 to 1.8. However, in certain situations, the dielectric layer 2 may have a refractive index (n) of from about 2.3 to 2.5. Example materials for dielectric layer 2 include silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, zinc oxide, tin oxide, titanium oxide (e.g., TiO_2), aluminum oxynitride, aluminum oxide, or mixtures thereof. Dielectric layer(s) 2 functions as a barrier layer in certain example embodiments of this invention, to reduce materials such as sodium from migrating outwardly from the glass substrate 1 and reaching the IR reflecting layer(s) and/or semiconductor. Moreover, dielectric layer 2 is material having a refractive index (n) in the range discussed above, in order to reduce visible light reflection and thus increase transmission of visible light (e.g., light from about 450-700 nm and/or 450-600 nm) through the coating and into the semiconductor 5 which leads to increased photovoltaic module output power.

[0031] Still referring to Fig. 1, multilayer front electrode 3 in the example embodiment shown in Fig. 1, which is provided for purposes of example only and is not intended to be limiting, includes from the glass substrate 1 outwardly first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) or dielectric layer 3a, first conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer 3b, second TCO 3c, second conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer 3d, third TCO 3e, and optional buffer layer 3f. Optionally, layer 3a may be a dielectric layer instead of a TCO in certain example instances and serve as a seed layer for the layer 3b. This multilayer film 3 makes up the front electrode in certain example embodiments of this invention. Of course, it is possible for certain layers of electrode 3 to be removed in certain alternative embodiments of this invention (e.g., one or more of layers 3a, 3c, 3d and/or 3e may be removed), and it is also possible for additional layers to be provided in the multilayer electrode 3. Front electrode 3 may be continuous across all or a substantial portion of glass substrate 1, or alternatively may be patterned into a desired design (e.g., stripes),

in different example embodiments of this invention. Each of layers/films 1-3 is substantially transparent in certain example embodiments of this invention.

[0032] First and second conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers 3b and 3d may be of or based on any suitable IR reflecting material such as silver, gold, or the like. These materials reflect significant amounts of IR radiation, thereby reducing the amount of IR which reaches the semiconductor film 5. Since IR increases the temperature of the device, the reduction of the amount of IR radiation reaching the semiconductor film 5 is advantageous in that it reduces the operating temperature of the photovoltaic module so as to increase module output power. Moreover, the highly conductive nature of these substantially metallic layers 3b and/or 3d permits the conductivity of the overall electrode 3 to be increased. In certain example embodiments of this invention, the multilayer electrode 3 has a sheet resistance of less than or equal to about 12 ohms/square, more preferably less than or equal to about 9 ohms/square, and even more preferably less than or equal to about 6 ohms/square. Again, the increased conductivity (same as reduced sheet resistance) increases the overall photovoltaic module output power, by reducing resistive losses in the lateral direction in which current flows to be collected at the edge of cell segments. It is noted that first and second conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers 3b and 3d (as well as the other layers of the electrode 3) are thin enough so as to be substantially transparent to visible light. In certain example embodiments of this invention, first and/or second conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers 3b and/or 3d are each from about 3 to 12 nm thick, more preferably from about 5 to 10 nm thick, and most preferably from about 5 to 8 nm thick. In embodiments where one of the layers 3b or 3d is not used, then the remaining conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layer may be from about 3 to 18 nm thick, more preferably from about 5 to 12 nm thick, and most preferably from about 6 to 11 nm thick in certain example embodiments of this invention. These thicknesses are desirable in that they permit the layers 3b and/or 3d to reflect significant amounts of IR radiation, while at the same time being substantially transparent to visible radiation which is permitted to reach the semiconductor 5 to be transformed by the photovoltaic device into electrical energy. The highly conductive IR reflecting layers 3b and 3d attribute to the overall conductivity of the electrode 3

much more than the TCO layers; this allows for expansion of the process window(s) of the TCO layer(s) which has a limited window area to achieve both high conductivity and transparency.

[0033] First, second, and third TCO layers 3a, 3c and 3e; respectively, may be of any suitable TCO material including but not limited to conductive forms of zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, indium-tin-oxide, indium zinc oxide (which may or may not be doped with silver), or the like. These layers are typically substoichiometric so as to render them conductive as is known in the art. For example, these layers are made of material(s) which gives them a resistance of no more than about 10 ohm-cm (more preferably no more than about 1 ohm-cm, and most preferably no more than about 20 mohm-cm). One or more of these layers may be doped with other materials such as fluorine, aluminum, antimony or the like in certain example instances, so long as they remain conductive and substantially transparent to visible light. In certain example embodiments of this invention, TCO layers 3c and/or 3e are thicker than layer 3a (e.g., at least about 5 nm, more preferably at least about 10, and most preferably at least about 20 or 30 nm thicker). In certain example embodiments of this invention, TCO layer 3a is from about 3 to 80 nm thick, more preferably from about 5-30 nm thick, with an example thickness being about 10 nm. Optional layer 3a is provided mainly as a seeding layer for layer 3b and/or for antireflection purposes, and its conductivity is not as important as that of layers 3b-3e (thus, layer 3a may be a dielectric instead of a TCO in certain example embodiments). In certain example embodiments of this invention, TCO layer 3c is from about 20 to 150 nm thick, more preferably from about 40 to 120 nm thick, with an example thickness being about 74-75 nm. In certain example embodiments of this invention, TCO layer 3e is from about 20 to 180 nm thick, more preferably from about 40 to 130 nm thick, with an example thickness being about 94 or 115 nm. In certain example embodiments, part of layer 3e, e.g., from about 1-25 nm or 5-25 nm thick portion, at the interface between layers 3e and 5 may be replaced with a low conductivity high refractive index (n) film 3f such as titanium oxide to enhance transmission of light as well as to reduce back diffusion of generated electrical carriers; in this way performance may be further improved.

[0034] In certain example embodiments of this invention, the photovoltaic device may be made by providing glass substrate 1, and then depositing (e.g., via sputtering or any other suitable technique) multilayer electrode 3 on the substrate 1. Thereafter the structure including substrate 1 and front electrode 3 is coupled with the rest of the device in order to form the photovoltaic device shown in Fig. 1. For example, the semiconductor layer 5 may then be formed over the front electrode on substrate 1. Alternatively, the back contact 7 and semiconductor 5 may be fabricated/formed on substrate 11 (e.g., of glass or other suitable material) first; then the electrode 3 and dielectric 2 may be formed on semiconductor 5 and encapsulated by the substrate 1 via an adhesive such as EVA.

[0035] The alternating nature of the TCO layers 3a, 3c and/or 3e, and the conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers 3b and/or 3d, is also advantageous in that it also one, two, three, four or all of the following advantages to be realized: (a) reduced sheet resistance (R_s) of the overall electrode 3 and thus increased conductivity and improved overall photovoltaic module output power; (b) increased reflection of infrared (IR) radiation by the electrode 3 thereby reducing the operating temperature of the semiconductor 5 portion of the photovoltaic module so as to increase module output power; (c) reduced reflection and increased transmission of light in the visible region of from about 450-700 nm (and/or 450-600 nm) by the front electrode 3 which leads to increased photovoltaic module output power; (d) reduced total thickness of the front electrode coating 3 which can reduce fabrication costs and/or time; and/or (e) an improved or enlarged process window in forming the TCO layer(s) because of the reduced impact of the TCO's conductivity on the overall electric properties of the module given the presence of the highly conductive substantially metallic layer(s).

[0036] The active semiconductor region or film 5 may include one or more layers, and may be of any suitable material. For example, the active semiconductor film 5 of one type of single junction amorphous silicon (a-Si) photovoltaic device includes three semiconductor layers, namely a p-layer, an n-layer and an i-layer. The p-type a-Si layer of the semiconductor film 5 may be the uppermost portion of the semiconductor film 5 in certain example embodiments of this invention; and the i-

layer is typically located between the p and n-type layers. These amorphous silicon based layers of film 5 may be of hydrogenated amorphous silicon in certain instances, but may also be of or include hydrogenated amorphous silicon carbon or hydrogenated amorphous silicon germanium, hydrogenated microcrystalline silicon, or other suitable material(s) in certain example embodiments of this invention. It is possible for the active region 5 to be of a double-junction or triple-junction type in alternative embodiments of this invention. CdTe may also be used for semiconductor film 5 in alternative embodiments of this invention.

[0037] Back contact, reflector and/or electrode 7 may be of any suitable electrically conductive material. For example and without limitation, the back contact or electrode 7 may be of a TCO and/or a metal in certain instances. Example TCO materials for use as back contact or electrode 7 include indium zinc oxide, indium-tin-oxide (ITO), tin oxide, and/or zinc oxide which may be doped with aluminum (which may or may not be doped with silver). The TCO of the back contact 7 may be of the single layer type or a multi-layer type in different instances. Moreover, the back contact 7 may include both a TCO portion and a metal portion in certain instances. For example, in an example multi-layer embodiment, the TCO portion of the back contact 7 may include a layer of a material such as indium zinc oxide (which may or may not be doped with silver), indium-tin-oxide (ITO), tin oxide, and/or zinc oxide closest to the active region 5, and the back contact may include another conductive and possibly reflective layer of a material such as silver, molybdenum, platinum, steel, iron, niobium, titanium, chromium, bismuth, antimony, or aluminum further from the active region 5 and closer to the superstrate 11. The metal portion may be closer to superstrate 11 compared to the TCO portion of the back contact 7.

[0038] The photovoltaic module may be encapsulated or partially covered with an encapsulating material such as encapsulant 9 in certain example embodiments. An example encapsulant or adhesive for layer 9 is EVA or PVB. However, other materials such as Tedlar type plastic, Nuvasil type plastic, Tefzel type plastic or the like may instead be used for layer 9 in different instances.

[0039] Utilizing the highly conductive substantially metallic IR reflecting layers 3b and 3d, and TCO layers 3a, 3c and 3d, to form a multilayer front electrode

3, permits the thin film photovoltaic device performance to be improved by reduced sheet resistance (increased conductivity) and tailored reflection and transmission spectra which best fit photovoltaic device response. Refractive indices of glass 1, hydrogenated a-Si as an example semiconductor 5, Ag as an example for layers 3b and 3d, and an example TCO are shown in Fig. 2. Based on these refractive indices (n), predicted transmission spectra impinging into the semiconductor 5 from the incident surface of substrate 1 are shown in Fig. 3. In particular, Fig. 3 is a percent transmission (T%) versus wavelength (nm) graph illustrating transmission spectra into a hydrogenated Si thin film 5 of a photovoltaic device comparing Examples 1-3 of this invention (see Examples 1-3 in Figs. 5-7) versus a comparative example (TCO reference). The TCO reference was made up of 3 mm thick glass substrate 1 and from the glass outwardly 30 nm of tin oxide, 20 nm of silicon oxide and 350 nm of TCO. Fig. 3 thus shows that the examples of this invention (Examples 1-3 shown in Figs. 5-7) has increased transmission in the approximately 450-600 and 450-700 nm wavelength ranges and thus increased photovoltaic module output power, compared to the comparative example (TCO reference).

[0040] Example 1 shown in Fig. 5 and charted in Figs. 3-4 was made up of 3 mm thick glass substrate 1, 16nm thick TiO_2 dielectric layer 2, 10 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3a, 8 nm thick Ag IR reflecting layer 3b, and 115 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3e. Layers 3c, 3d and 3f were not present in Example 1. Example 2 shown in Fig. 6 and charted in Figs. 3-4 was made up of 3 mm thick glass substrate 1, 16nm thick TiO_2 dielectric layer 2, 10 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3a, 8 nm thick Ag IR reflecting layer 3b, 100 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3e, and 20 nm thick titanium suboxide layer 3f. Example 3 shown in Fig. 7 and charted in Figs. 3-4 was made up of 3 mm thick glass substrate 1, 45 nm thick dielectric layer 2, 10 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3a, 5 nm thick Ag IR reflecting layer 3b, 75 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3c, 7 nm thick Ag IR reflecting layer 3d, 95 nm thick zinc oxide TCO doped with Al 3e, and 20 nm thick titanium suboxide layer 3f. These single and double-silver layered coatings of Examples 1-3 had a sheet resistance less than 10 ohms/square and 6 ohms/square, respectively, and total thicknesses much less than the 400 nm thickness of the prior art. Examples 1-3 had tailored transmission spectra, as shown in Fig. 3, having more

than 80% transmission into the semiconductor 5 in part or all of the wavelength range of from about 450-600 nm and/or 450-700 nm, where AM1.5 has the strongest intensity and photovoltaic devices may possibly have the highest or substantially the highest quantum efficiency.

[0041] Meanwhile, Fig. 4 is a percent reflection (R %) versus wavelength (nm) graph illustrating reflection spectra from a hydrogenated Si thin film of a photovoltaic device comparing Examples 1-3 versus the above mentioned comparative example; this shows that Examples 1-3 had increased reflection in the IR range thereby reducing the operating temperature of the photovoltaic modules so as to increase module output power, compared to the comparative example. In Fig. 4, the low reflection in the visible range of from about 450-600 nm and/or 450-700 nm (the cell's high efficiency range) is advantageously coupled with high reflection in the near and short IR range beyond about 1000 nm; the high reflection in the near and short IR range reduces the absorption of solar thermal energy that will result in a better cell output due to the reduced cell temperature and series resistance in the module. As shown in Fig. 4, the front glass substrate 1 and front electrode 3 taken together have a reflectance of at least about 45% (more preferably at least about 55%) in a substantial part or majority of a near to short IR wavelength range of from about 1000-2500 nm and/or 1000 to 2300 nm. In certain example embodiments, it reflects at least 50% of solar energy in the range of from 1000-2500 nm and/or 1200-2300 nm. In certain example embodiments, the front glass substrate and front electrode 3 taken together have an IR reflectance of at least about 45% and/or 55% in a substantial part or a majority of a near IR wavelength range of from about 1000-2500 nm, possibly from 1200-2300 nm. In certain example embodiments, it may block at least 50% of solar energy in the range of 1000-2500 nm.

[0042] While the electrode 3 is used as a front electrode in a photovoltaic device in certain embodiments of this invention described and illustrated herein, it is also possible to use the electrode 3 as another electrode in the context of a photovoltaic device or otherwise.

[0043] Fig. 8 is a cross sectional view of a photovoltaic device according to another example embodiment of this invention. An optional antireflective (AR) layer

1a may be provided on the light incident side of the front glass substrate 1 in any embodiment of this invention, as indicated for example by AR layer(s) 1a shown in Fig. 8 (e.g., see also Figs. 9-10). The photovoltaic device in Fig. 8 includes glass substrate 1, dielectric layer(s) 2 (e.g., of or including one or more of silicon oxide, silicon oxynitride, silicon nitride, titanium oxide, niobium oxide, and/or the like) which may function as a sodium barrier for blocking sodium from migrating out of the front glass substrate 1, seed layer 4b (e.g., of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like) which may be a TCO or dielectric in different example embodiments, silver based IR reflecting layer 4c, optional overcoat or contact layer 4d (e.g., of or including an oxide of Ni and/or Cr, zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, or the like) which may be a TCO, TCO 4e (e.g., of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, zinc tin oxide, indium tin oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like), optional buffer layer 4f (e.g., of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, zinc tin oxide, indium tin oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like) which may be conductive to some extent, semiconductor 5 (e.g., CdS/CdTe, a-Si, or the like), optional back contact, reflector and/or electrode 7, optional adhesive 9, and optional back glass substrate 11. It is noted that in certain example embodiments, layer 4b may be the same as layer 3a described above, layer 4c may be the same as layer 3b or 3d described above this applies to Figs. 8-10), layer 4e may be the same as layer 3e described above (this also applies to Figs. 8-10), and layer 4f may be the same as layer 3f described above (this also applies to Figs. 8-10) (see descriptions above as to other embodiments in this respect). Likewise, layers 1, 5, 7, 9 and 11 are also discussed above in connection with other embodiments.

[0044] For purposes of example only, an example of the Fig. 8 embodiment is as follows (note that certain optional layers shown in Fig. 8 are not used in this example). For example, referring to Fig. 8, glass substrate 1 (e.g., about 3.2 mm thick), dielectric layer 2 (e.g., silicon oxynitride about 20 nm thick possibly followed by dielectric TiOx about 20 nm thick), Ag seed layer 4b (e.g., dielectric or TCO zinc oxide or zinc aluminum oxide about 10 nm thick), IR reflecting layer 4c (silver about 5-8 nm thick), TCO 4e (e.g., conductive zinc oxide, tin oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, ITO from about 50-250 nm thick, more preferably from about 100-150 nm thick), and

possibly conductive buffer layer 4f (TCO zinc oxide, tin oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, ITO, or the like, from about 10-50 nm thick). In certain example embodiments, the buffer layer 4f (or 3f) is designed to have a refractive index (n) of from about 2.1 to 2.4, more preferably from about 2.15 to 2.35, for substantial index matching to the semiconductor 5 (e.g., CdS or the like) in order to improve efficiency of the device.

[0045] The photovoltaic device of Fig. 8 may have a sheet resistance of no greater than about 18 ohms/square, more preferably no greater than about 15 ohms/square, even more preferably no greater than about 13 ohms/square in certain example embodiments of this invention. Moreover, the Fig. 8 embodiment may have tailored transmission spectra having more than 80% transmission into the semiconductor 5 in part or all of the wavelength range of from about 450-600 nm and/or 450-700 nm, where AM1.5 may have the strongest intensity and in certain example instances the cell may have the highest or substantially the highest quantum efficiency.

[0046] Fig. 9 is a cross sectional view of a photovoltaic device according to yet another example embodiment of this invention. The photovoltaic device of the Fig. 9 embodiment includes optional antireflective (AR) layer 1a on the light incident side of the front glass substrate 1, first dielectric layer 2a, second dielectric layer 2b, third dielectric layer 2c which may optionally function as a seed layer (e.g., of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like) for the silver based layer 4c, conductive silver based IR reflecting layer 4c, optional overcoat or contact layer 4d (e.g., of or including an oxide of Ni and/or Cr, zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, or the like) which may be a TCO or dielectric, TCO 4e (e.g., including one or more layers, such as of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, zinc tin oxide, indium tin oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like), optional buffer layer 4f (e.g., of or including zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, tin antimony oxide, zinc tin oxide, indium tin oxide, indium zinc oxide, or the like) which may be conductive to some extent, semiconductor 5 (e.g., one or more layers such as CdS/CdTe, a-Si, or the like), optional back contact, reflector and/or electrode 7, optional adhesive 9, and optional back/rear glass substrate 11. Semiconductor film 5 may include a single pin or pn

semiconductor structure, or a tandem semiconductor structure in different embodiments of this invention. Semiconductor 5 may be of or include silicon in certain example instances. In other example embodiments, semiconductor film 5 may include a first layer of or including CdS (e.g., window layer) adjacent or closest to layer(s) 4e and/or 4f and a second semiconductor layer of or including CdTe (e.g., main absorber) adjacent or closest to the back electrode or contact 7.

[0047] Referring to the Fig. 9 embodiment (and the Fig. 10 embodiment), in certain example embodiments, first dielectric layer 2a has a relatively low refractive index (n) (e.g., n of from about 1.7 to 2.2, more preferably from about 1.8 to 2.2, still more preferably from about 1.95 to 2.1, and most preferably from about 2.0 to 2.08), second dielectric layer 2b has a relatively high (compared to layer 2a) refractive index (n) (e.g., n of from about 2.2 to 2.6, more preferably from about 2.3 to 2.5, and most preferably from about 2.35 to 2.45), and third dielectric layer 2c has a relatively low (compared to layer 2b) refractive index (n) (e.g., n of from about 1.8 to 2.2, more preferably from about 1.95 to 2.1, and most preferably from about 2.0 to 2.05). In certain example embodiments, the first low index dielectric layer 2a may be of or include silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, or any other suitable material, the second high index dielectric layer 2b may be of or include an oxide of titanium (e.g., TiO_2 or the like), and the third dielectric layer 2c may be of or include zinc oxide or any other suitable material. In certain example embodiments, layers 2a-2c combine to form a good index matching stack which also functions as a buffer against sodium migration from the glass 1. In certain example embodiments, the first dielectric layer 2a is from about 5-30 nm thick, more preferably from about 10-20 nm thick, the second dielectric layer 2b is from about 5-30 nm thick, more preferably from about 10-20 nm thick, and the third layer 2c is of a lesser thickness and is from about 3-20 nm thick, more preferably from about 5-15 nm thick, and most preferably from about 6-14 nm thick. While layers 2a, 2b and 2c are dielectrics in certain embodiments of this invention, one, two or all three of these layers may be dielectric or TCO in certain other example embodiments of this invention. Layers 2b and 2c are metal oxides in certain example embodiments of this invention, whereas layer 2a is a metal oxide and/or nitride, or silicon nitride in certain example instances. Layers 2a-2c may be deposited by sputtering or any other suitable technique.

[0048] Still referring to the Fig. 9 embodiment (and the Fig. 10 embodiment), the TCO layer(s) 4e may be of or include any suitable TCO including but not limited to zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide and/or the like. TCO layer or file 4e may include multiple layers in certain example instances. For example, certain instances, the TCO 4 includes a first layer of a first TCO metal oxide (e.g., zinc oxide) adjacent Ag 4c, Ag overcoat 4d and a second layer of a second TCO metal oxide (e.g., tin oxide) adjacent and contacting layer 4f and/or 5.

[0049] For purposes of example only, an example of the Fig. 9 embodiment is as follows. For example, referring to Fig. 9, glass substrate 1 (e.g., float glass about 3.2 mm thick, and a refractive index n of about 1.52), first dielectric layer 2a (e.g., silicon nitride about 15 nm thick, having a refractive index n of about 2.07), second dielectric layer 2b (e.g., oxide of Ti, such as TiO_2 or other suitable stoichiometry, about 16 nm thick, having a refractive index n of about 2.45), third dielectric layer 2c (e.g., zinc oxide, possibly doped with Al, about 9 nm thick, having a refractive index n of about 2.03), IR reflecting layer 4c (silver about 5-8 nm thick, e.g., 6 nm), silver overcoat 4d of NiCrO_x about 1-3 nm thick which may or may not be oxidation graded, TCO film 4e (e.g., conductive zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide and/or tin oxide about 10-150 nm thick), a semiconductor film 5 including a first layer of CdS (e.g., about 70 nm) closest to substrate 1 and a second layer of CdTe further from substrate 1, back contact or electrode 7, optional adhesive 9, and optionally substrate 11.

[0050] The photovoltaic device of Fig. 9 (and/or Fig. 10) may have a sheet resistance of no greater than about 18 ohms/square, more preferably no greater than about 15 ohms/square, even more preferably no greater than about 13 ohms/square in certain example embodiments of this invention. Moreover, the Fig. 9 (and/or Fig. 10) embodiment may have tailored transmission spectra having more than 80% transmission into the semiconductor 5 in part or all of the wavelength range of from about 450-600 nm and/or 450-700 nm, where AM1.5 may have the strongest intensity.

[0051] Fig. 10 is a cross sectional view of a photovoltaic device according to still another example embodiment of this invention. The Fig. 10 embodiment is the same as the Fig. 9 embodiment discussed above, except for the TCO film 4e. In the

Fig. 10 embodiment, the TCO film 4e includes a first layer 4e' of or including a first TCO metal oxide (e.g., zinc oxide, which may or may not be doped with Al or the like) adjacent and contacting layer 4d and a second layer 4e'' of a second TCO metal oxide (e.g., tin oxide) adjacent and contacting layer 4f and/or 5 (e.g., layer 4f may be omitted, as in previous embodiments). Layer 4e' is also substantially thicker than layer 4e'' in certain example embodiments. In certain example embodiments, the first TCO layer 4e' has a resistivity which is less than that of the second TCO layer 4e''. In certain example embodiments, the first TCO layer 4e' may be of zinc oxide, Al-doped zinc oxide, or ITO about 70-150 nm thick (e.g., about 110 nm) having a resistivity of no greater than about 1 ohm.cm, and the second TCO layer 4e'' may be of tin oxide about 10-50 nm thick (e.g., about 30 nm) having a resistivity of from about 10-100 ohm.cm, possibly from about 2-100 ohm.cm. The first TCO layer 4e' is thicker and more conductive than the second TCO layer 4e'' in certain example embodiments, which is advantageous as layer 4e' is closer to the conductive Ag based layer 4c thereby leading to improved efficiency of the photovoltaic device. Moreover, this design is advantageous in that CdS of the film 5 adheres or sticks well to tin oxide which may be used in or for layer 4e''. TCO layers 4e' and/or 4e'' may be deposited by sputtering or any other suitable technique.

[0052] In certain example instances, the first TCO layer 4e' may be of or include ITO (indium tin oxide) instead of zinc oxide. In certain example instances, the ITO of layer 4e' may be about 90% In, 10% Sn, or alternatively about 50% In, 50% Sn.

[0053] In the Fig. 9-10 embodiment(s), the use of at least these three dielectrics 2a-2c is advantageous in that it permits reflections to be reduced thereby resulting in a more efficient photovoltaic device. Moreover, it is possible for the overcoat layer 4d (e.g., of or including an oxide of Ni and/or Cr) to be oxidation graded, continuously or discontinuously, in certain example embodiments of this invention. In particular, layer 4d may be designed so as to be more metallic (less oxidized) at a location therein closer to Ag based layer 4d than at a location therein further from the Ag based layer 4d; this has been found to be advantageous for thermal stability reasons in that the coating does not degrade as much during

subsequently high temperature processing which may be associated with the photovoltaic device manufacturing process or otherwise.

[0054] In certain example embodiments of this invention, it has been surprisingly found that a thickness of from about 120-160 nm, more preferably from about 130-150 nm (e.g., 140 nm), for the TCO film 4e is advantageous in that the J_{sc} peaks in this range. For thinner TCO thicknesses, the J_{sc} decreases by as much as about 6.5% until it bottoms out at about a TCO thickness of about 60 nm. Below 60 nm, it increases again until at a TCO film 4e thickness of about 15-35 nm (more preferably 20-30 nm) it is attractive, but such thin coatings may not be desirable in certain example non-limiting situations. Thus, in order to achieve a reduction in short circuit current density of CdS/CdTe photovoltaic devices in certain example instances, the thickness of TCO film 4e may be provided in the range of from about 15-35 nm, or in the range of from about 120-160 nm or 130-150 nm.

[0055] While the invention has been described in connection with what is presently considered to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the disclosed embodiment, but on the contrary, is intended to cover various modifications and equivalent arrangements included within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A photovoltaic device comprising:
a front substrate;
a semiconductor film;
a substantially transparent front electrode located between at least the front substrate and the semiconductor film;
wherein the substantially transparent front electrode comprises, moving away from the front substrate toward the semiconductor film, at least a first substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic infrared (IR) reflecting layer comprising silver and/or gold, and a first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film located between at least the IR reflecting layer and the semiconductor film.
2. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the first TCO film comprises one or more of zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, indium-tin-oxide, and indium zinc oxide.
3. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising at least one dielectric layer provided between at least the front substrate and the IR reflecting layer, wherein the AR dielectric layer has a refractive index (n) of from about 2.2 to 2.6.
4. The photovoltaic device of claim 3, wherein the dielectric layer has a refractive index (n) of from about 2.3 to 2.5.
5. The photovoltaic device of claim 3, wherein the dielectric layer comprises an oxide of titanium and/or an oxide of niobium.
6. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising at least one dielectric layer provided between at least the front substrate and the IR reflecting layer, wherein the dielectric layer comprises one or more of: silicon nitride, silicon oxide, and/or silicon oxynitride.
7. The photovoltaic device of claim 6, wherein the dielectric layer has a refractive index (n) of from about 1.6 to 2.0.

8. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front electrode further comprises a seed layer comprising at least one metal oxide located between the front substrate and the IR reflecting layer, wherein the seed layer directly contacts the IR reflecting layer.
9. The photovoltaic device of claim 8, wherein the seed layer comprises zinc oxide which may optionally be doped with aluminum.
10. The photovoltaic device of claim 8, wherein the seed layer is a dielectric.
11. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front electrode further comprises an overcoat layer provided between and contacting each of the IR reflecting layer and the first TCO film.
12. The photovoltaic device of claim 11, wherein the overcoat layer comprises one or more of: an oxide of Ni and/or Cr, and/or zinc oxide.
13. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising a second TCO film provided between the first TCO film and the semiconductor film.
14. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the substantially transparent front electrode further comprises a second substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic infrared (IR) reflecting layer comprising silver and/or gold.
15. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the first IR reflecting layer comprises silver and/or wherein the front glass substrate comprises glass.
16. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising a dielectric layer having a refractive index of from about 1.6 to 2.2 located between the front glass substrate and the front electrode.
17. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the first IR reflecting layer is from about 3 to 12 nm thick.
18. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the first TCO film is from about 40 to 130 nm thick.

19. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front substrate and the front electrode taken together have a transmission of at least about 80% in at least a substantial part of a wavelength range of from about 450-600 nm.

20. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front substrate and front electrode taken together have an IR reflectance of at least about 45% in at least a substantial part of an IR wavelength range of from about 1400-2300 nm.

21. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front substrate and front electrode taken together have an IR reflectance of at least about 45% in at least a majority of an IR wavelength range of from about 1000-2500 nm.

22. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the semiconductor film comprises CdS and/or CdTe.

23. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the semiconductor film comprises a-Si.

24. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the semiconductor film comprises a first layer comprising CdS and a second layer comprising CdTe, the first layer comprising CdS being provided between the front substrate and the second layer comprising CdTe.

25. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein said first TCO film comprises a first layer comprising a first metal oxide and a second layer comprising a second metal oxide, the first layer of the TCO film having a resistivity substantially less than that of the second layer of the TCO film, and wherein the first layer of the TCO film is located closer to the front substrate than is the second layer of the TCO film.

26. The photovoltaic device of claim 25, wherein the first layer of the TCO film is substantially thicker than the second layer of the TCO film.

27. The photovoltaic device of claim 25, wherein the first layer of the TCO film comprises zinc oxide and/or indium-tin-oxide, and the second layer of the TCO film comprises tin oxide.

28. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising a dielectric film located between at least the front substrate and the front electrode, the dielectric film comprising multiple layers.

29. The photovoltaic device of claim 28, wherein said dielectric film comprises, moving away from the front substrate, a first dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 1.8 to 2.2, and a second dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 2.2 to 2.6, the first dielectric layer having a refractive index lower than that of the second dielectric layer.

30. The photovoltaic device of claim 28, wherein said dielectric film comprises, moving away from the front substrate, a first dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 1.8 to 2.2, and a second dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 2.2 to 2.6, the first dielectric layer having a refractive index lower than that of the second dielectric layer, and a third dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 1.8 to 2.2.

31. The photovoltaic device of claim 30, wherein the first dielectric layer comprises silicon nitride and has a refractive index of from about 1.95 to 2.1.

32. The photovoltaic device of claim 30, wherein the second dielectric layer comprises an oxide of titanium and has a refractive index of from about 2.3 to 2.5.

33. The photovoltaic device of claim 30, wherein the third dielectric layer comprises zinc oxide and has a refractive index of from about 1.95 to 2.1.

34. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, further comprising a layer comprising metal oxide located between the IR reflecting layer and the TCO film, wherein the layer comprising metal oxide is oxidation graded.

35. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the layer comprising metal oxide comprises an oxide of Ni and/or Cr.

36. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the TCO film is from about 120-160 nm thick.

37. The photovoltaic device of claim 1, wherein the front substrate is a glass substrate.

38. An electrode structure adapted for use in a photovoltaic device including a semiconductor film, the electrode structure comprising:

a substantially transparent multilayer electrode supported by a substrate;

wherein the substantially transparent multilayer electrode comprises, moving away from the substrate, at least a first layer comprising a metal oxide, a substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic infrared (IR) reflecting layer comprising silver, and a transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film.

39. The electrode structure of claim 38, wherein the TCO film comprises one or more of zinc oxide, zinc aluminum oxide, tin oxide, indium-tin-oxide, and indium zinc oxide.

40. The electrode structure of claim 38, wherein the first layer comprising the metal oxide comprises zinc oxide.

41. The electrode structure of claim 38, wherein said TCO film comprises a first layer comprising a first metal oxide and a second layer comprising a second metal oxide, the first layer of the TCO film having a resistivity substantially less than that of the second layer of the TCO film, and wherein the first layer of the TCO film is located closer to the substrate than is the second layer of the TCO film.

42. The electrode structure of claim 41, wherein the first layer of the TCO film is substantially thicker than the second layer of the TCO film.

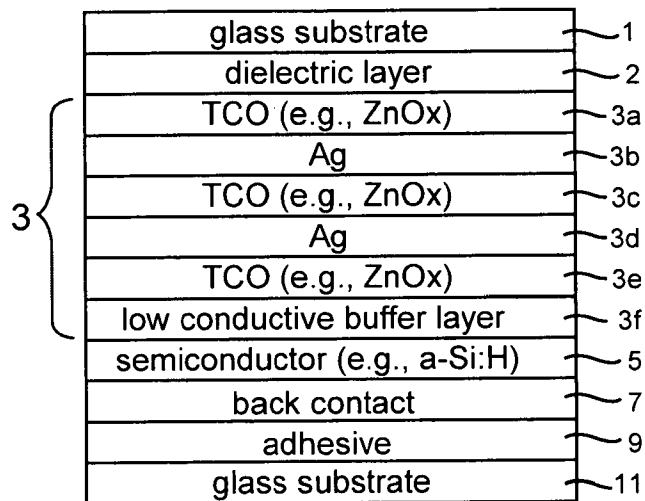
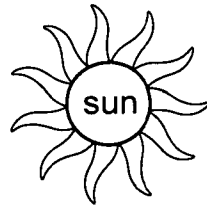
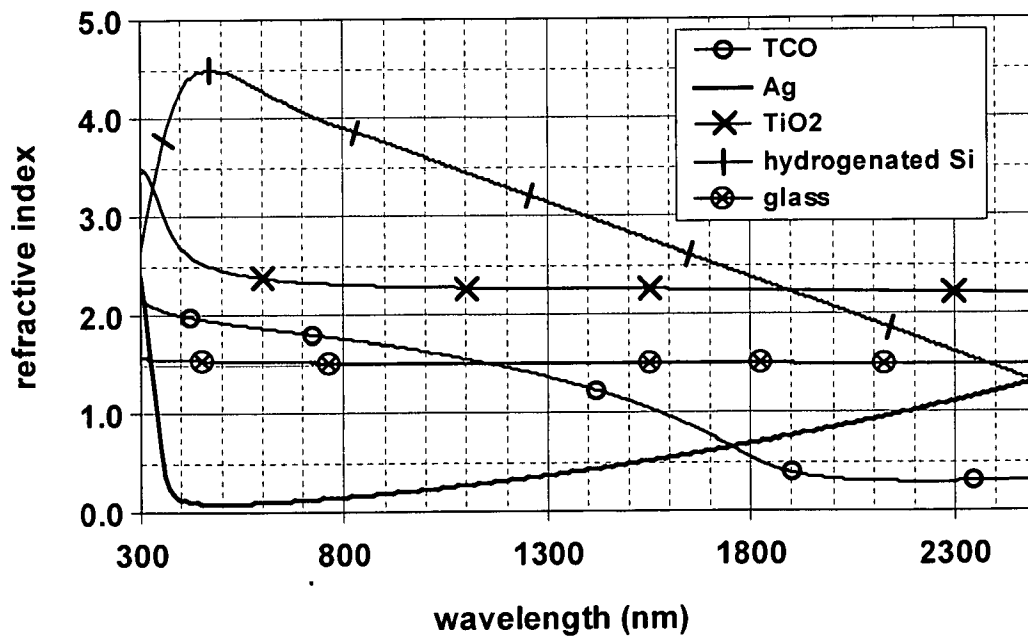
43. The electrode structure of claim 41, wherein the first layer of the TCO film comprises zinc oxide and/or indium-tin-oxide, and the second layer of the TCO film comprises tin oxide.

44. The electrode structure of claim 38, further comprising a dielectric film located between at least the substrate and the front electrode, the dielectric film comprising multiple layers, wherein said dielectric film comprises, moving away from the substrate, a first dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 1.8 to 2.2, and a second dielectric layer having a refractive index (n) of from about 2.2 to

2.6, the first dielectric layer having a refractive index lower than that of the second dielectric layer.

45. A photovoltaic device comprising:
- a glass substrate;
 - a semiconductor film;
 - a substantially transparent electrode located between at least the substrate and the semiconductor film;
- wherein the substantially transparent electrode comprises, moving away from the glass substrate toward the semiconductor film, at least a first substantially transparent conductive substantially metallic layer comprising silver, and a first transparent conductive oxide (TCO) film located between at least the layer comprising silver and the semiconductor film.

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**FIG. 1****FIG. 2**

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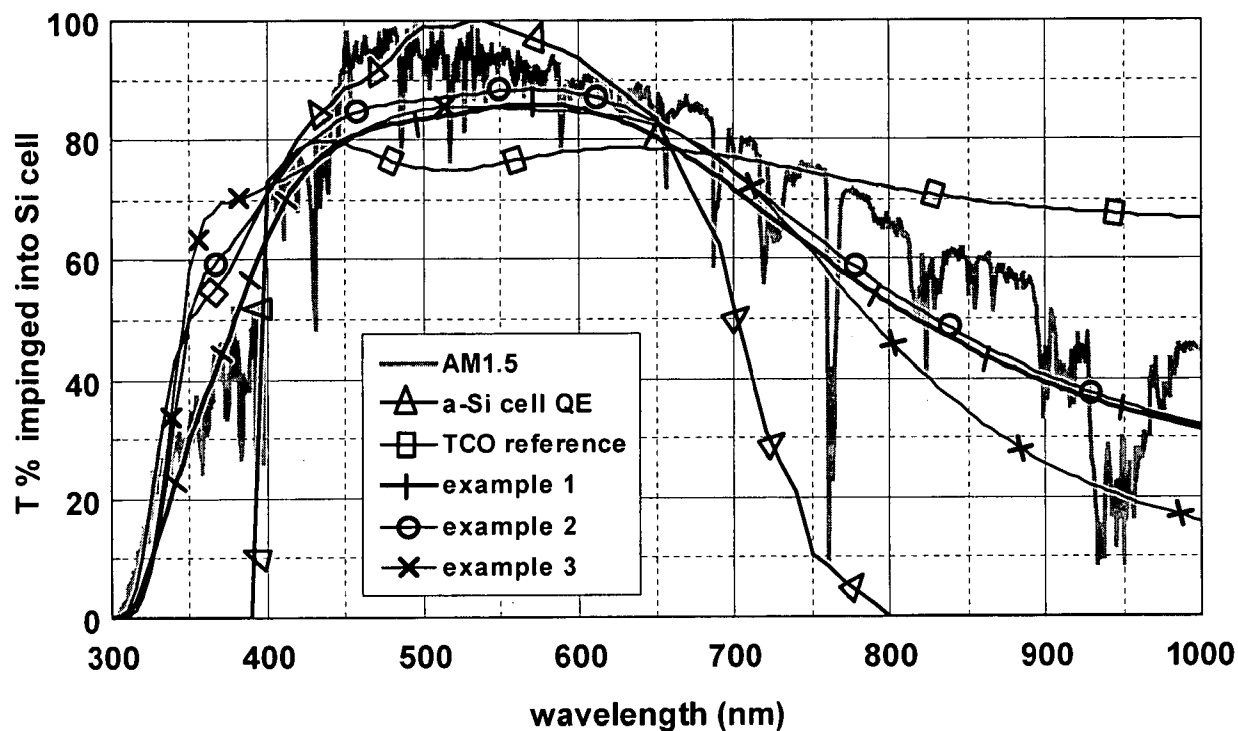


FIG. 3

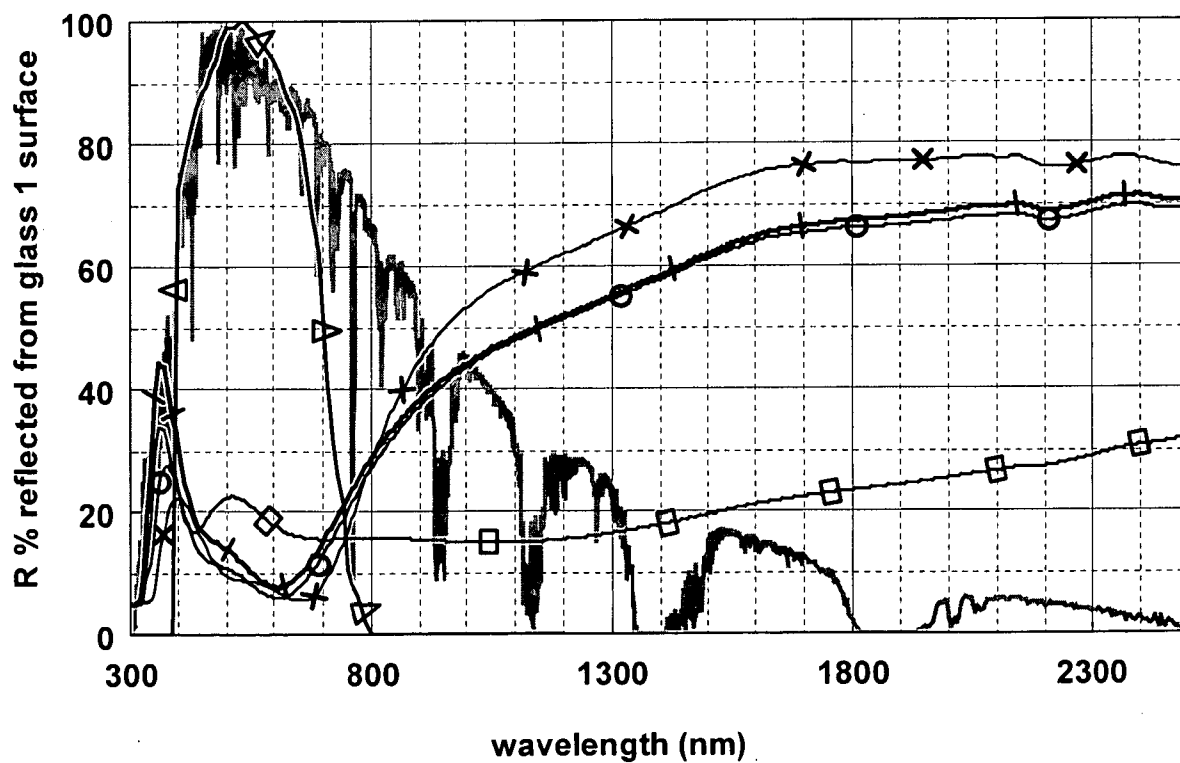


FIG. 4

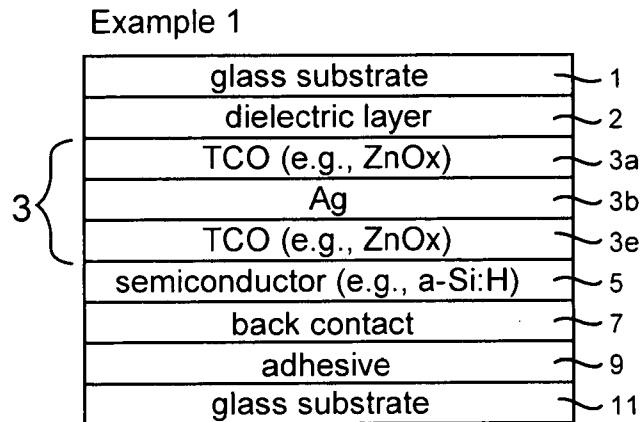


FIG. 5

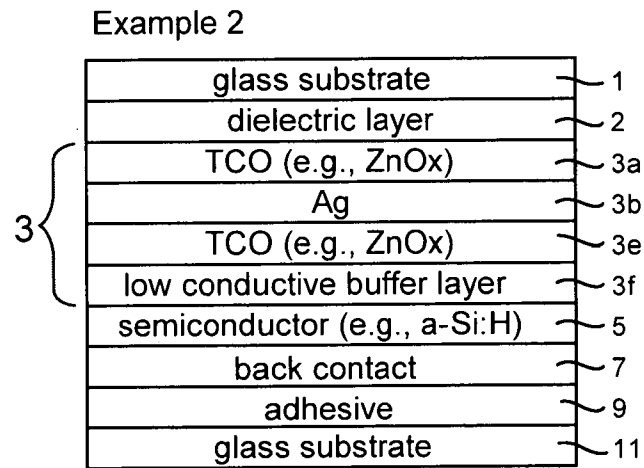


FIG. 6

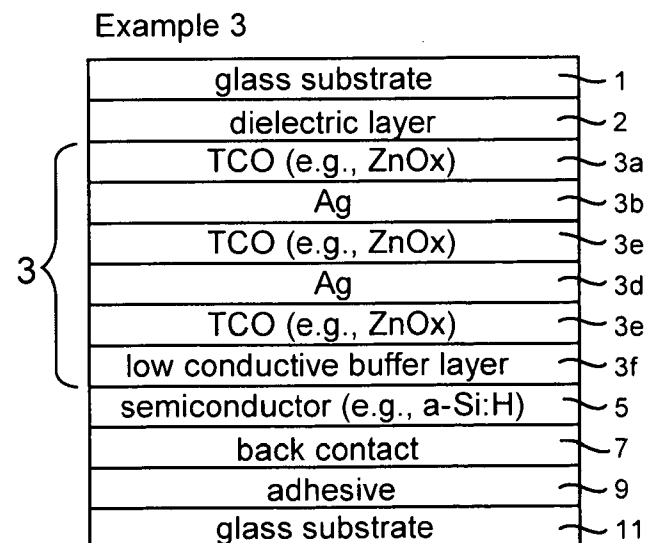
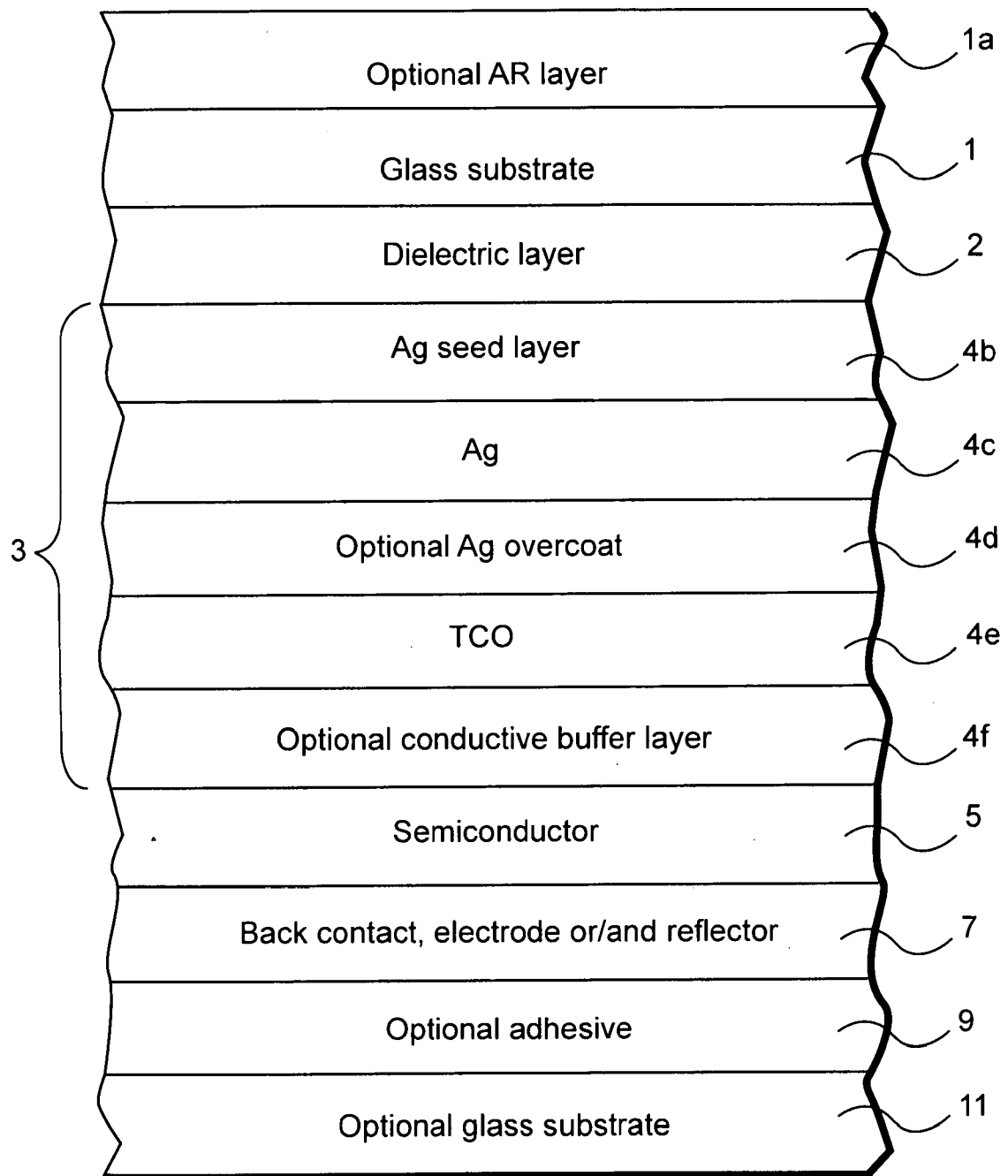
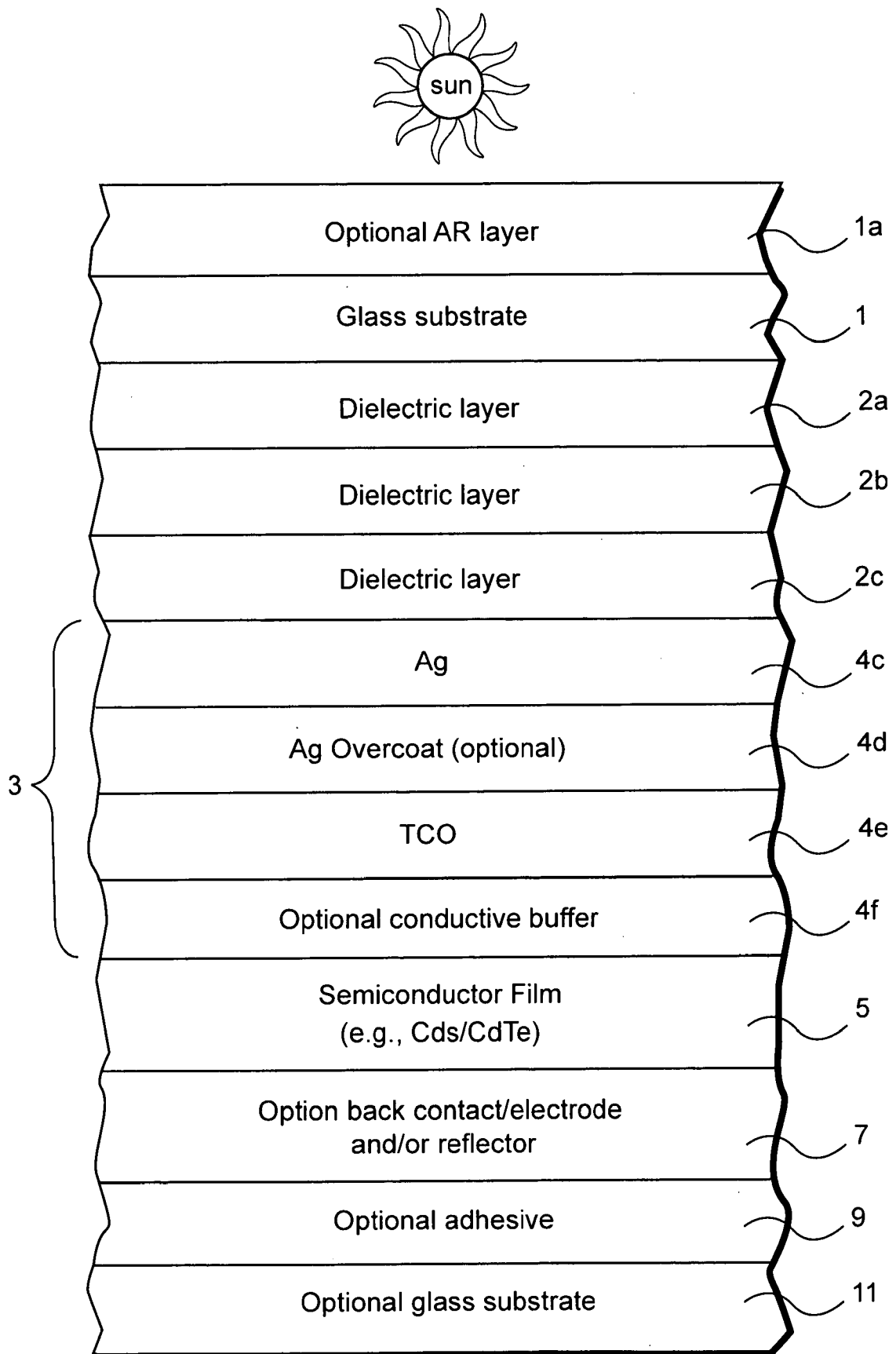


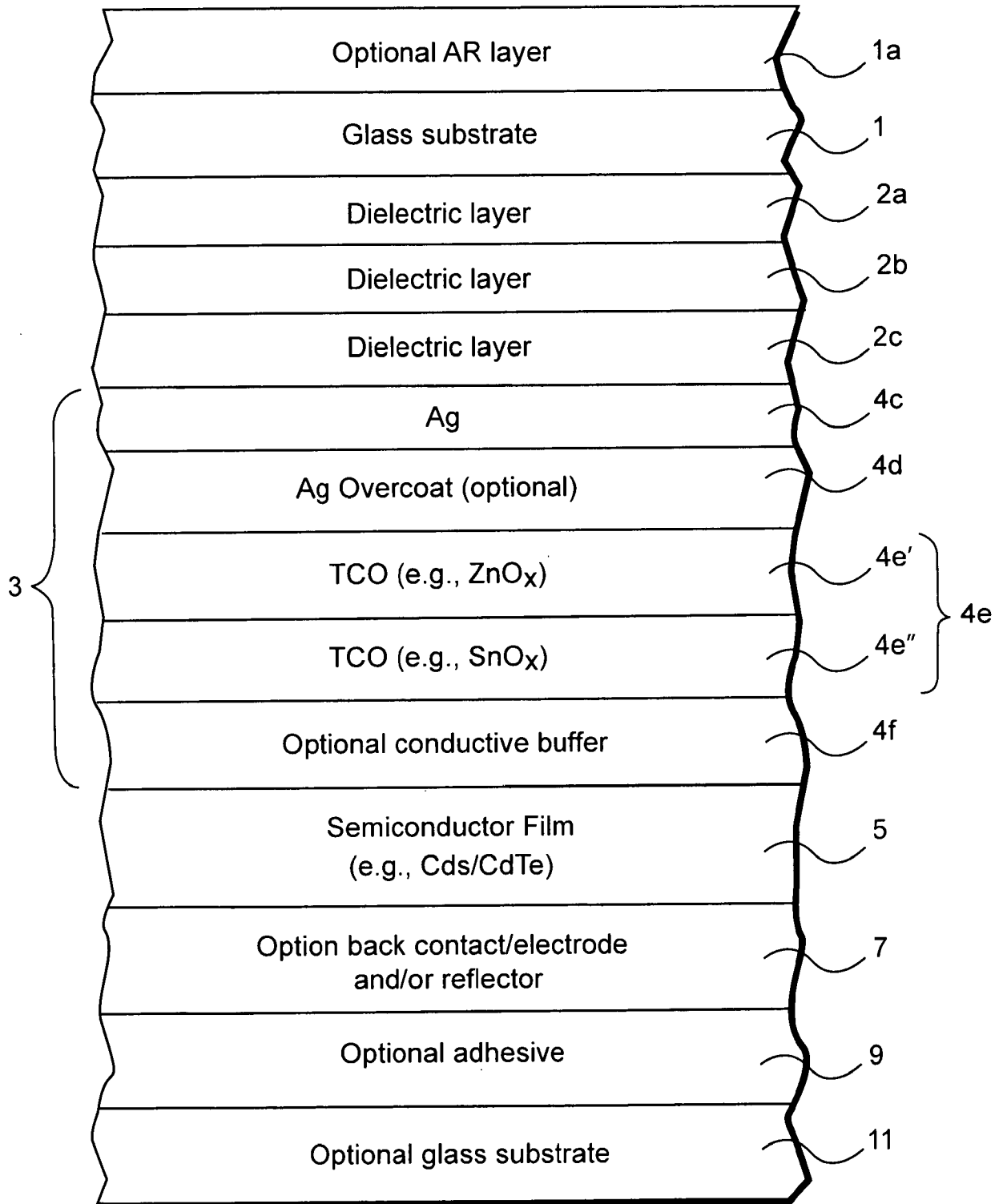
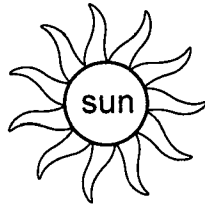
FIG. 7

**FIG. 8**

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**FIG. 9**

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**FIG. 10**