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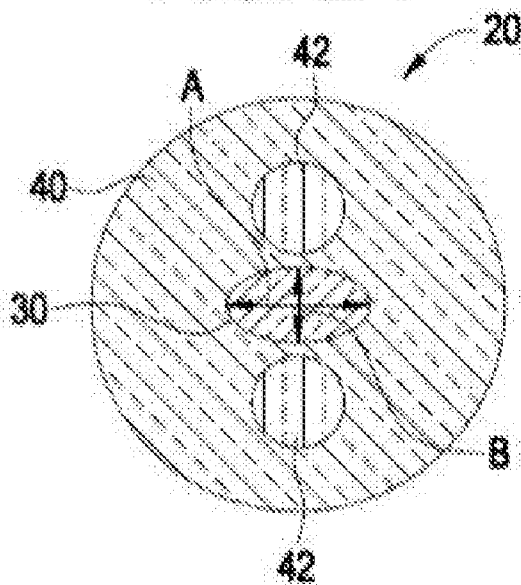
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(54) **Title:** POLARIZATION MAINTAINING OPTICAL FIBER

FIG. 2A



(57) **Abstract:** An optical fiber, comprising: (i) a core, (ii) a cladding surrounding the core, (iii) at least one stress member adjacent the fiber core and situated within the cladding, said stress member comprising silica doped with F.

POLARIZATION MAINTAINING OPTICAL FIBER

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C § 119 of the U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 62/135962 filed on March 20th 2015, the content of which is relied upon and incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] The present invention relates generally to optical fiber, and more particularly to a polarization maintaining optical fiber.

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

[0003] Polarization maintaining (PM) optical fibers are useful for ultra-high speed transmission systems and many other applications. One type of prior polarization maintaining fiber includes, as shown in **Fig. 1**, a central core 10 surrounded by a cladding 11. Core 10 and cladding 11 are formed of conventional materials employed in the formation of optical waveguides. The refractive index of the core material is greater than that of the cladding material. By way of example only, core 10 may be comprised of silica containing one or more dopants which increase the refractive index thereof, such as germania. Cladding 11 may comprise pure silica, silica containing a lesser amount of dopant than core 10, or silica containing one or more down dopants, at least one of which is an oxide of an element such as boron or fluorine which lowers the refractive index of silica. In **Fig. 1**, diametrically opposed relative to core 10, are two regions 12 (stress inducing rods) formed of a glass silica doped boron (e.g., with 20 to 25 wt% B) having a coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE) different from that of cladding material 11. When such a fiber is drawn, the longitudinally-extending regions 12 and the cladding regions will shrink different amounts whereby regions 12 will be put into a state of tension or compression depending upon the CTE thereof relative to that of the cladding 11. A strain induced birefringence, which is thus induced by

anisotropic thermal stress which results from the mismatch of CTEs between regions 12 and the surrounding regions 11, reduces coupling between the two polarized fundamental modes (with orthogonal polarization directions).

[0004] One major drawback of these PM attained through the CTE mismatch (between the cladding 11 and regions 12), is that these fibers are temperature-sensitive due to the fact that the thermal stress changes with temperature. This thermal sensitivity often compromises the stability of the PM performance. Thermal stability of PM fibers is very important for many applications, such as in high-power amps/lasers, high-precision airborne space navigation, and deep-sea (or land) sensor applications, where the fiber can experience dramatic temperature changes during operation. These changes can result in PM characteristic degradation causing deterioration in performance, low navigational accuracy, and possibly a total failure in the device/system if additional, often costly, temperature management is not employed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Some embodiments of the present invention relate to an optical fiber comprising: (i) a core, (ii) a cladding surrounding the core, and (iii) at least one stress member adjacent the fiber core and situated within the cladding, the stress member comprising F doped silica with 0 to 1wt% of B.

[0006] Preferably the at least one stress member comprises 0 to 0.5 wt% of B. According to some exemplary embodiments the amount of B in the at least one stress member is less than 0.05 wt%. In some embodiments the at least one stress member includes less than 0.01 wt% B. In some embodiments the at least one stress member includes no B. Preferably the amount of F in the at least one stress member is 1 wt% or greater. According to some embodiments the at least one stress member has $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$. Preferably, the optical fiber supports polarization maintenance within an operating wavelength range of 800 nm to 1600 nm (e.g., 850 nm, 1060 nm, 1310 nm, and/or 1550 nm). Preferably the stress member has

thermal stress coefficient σ_t and mechanical stress coefficient σ_m , and $\sigma_t < 0.1\sigma_m$. Preferably the optical fiber has birefringence of greater than 5×10^{-5} (e.g., 1×10^{-4} to 1×10^{-3}).

[0007] In one embodiment, the central core is surrounded by this stress member and the stress member is an annular region of fluorine doped silica. In another embodiment, the stress member includes at least two stress-applying parts (SAPs) (e.g., F doped stress rods with 0 to 1 wt% B) situated on opposite sides of the core.

[0008] In accordance with some embodiments of the invention, the central core preferably has a delta %, Δ_1 , of between about 0.2% and 2.5%. In single-mode fibers for use in telecommunications and fiber sensors, the central core delta %, Δ_1 is preferably of between about 0.3% to 2.5%. Some fiber embodiments disclosed herein are, for example, single-mode fibers with core diameters of about 3 to 12 microns.

[0009] One advantage of the polarization maintaining fibers according to the embodiments of the present invention is substantially stable polarization maintaining performance which has no, or minimal temperature sensitivity.

[0010] Additional features and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the detailed description which follows, and in part will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from that description or recognized by practicing the invention as described herein, including the detailed description which follows, the claims, as well as the appended drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Fig. 1 is a schematic cross-sectional view of an optical waveguide of the prior art.

[0012] Fig. 2A is a schematic cross-sectional view of a first embodiment of the polarization maintaining optical fiber in accordance with the present invention.

[0013] Fig. 2B is a partial schematic cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of the polarization maintaining (PM) optical fiber in accordance with the present invention.

[0014] Fig. 2C is a schematic cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the polarization maintaining optical fiber in accordance with the present invention.

[0015] Fig. 2D is a schematic cross-sectional view of a fourth embodiment of the polarization maintaining optical fiber in accordance with the present invention.

[0016] Fig. 3 is a plot measured by OSA (optical spectrum analyzer) showing the spectrum (transmitted power in dBm units) vs. wavelength of the optical fiber of Fig. 2A.

[0017] Figs. 4A and 4B are cross-sectional views of measured 2-dimensional refractive index distributions of two embodiments of the single polarization optical fiber in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0018] For purposes of the description herein, it is to be understood that the invention may assume various alternative configurations and step sequences, except where expressly specified to the contrary. It is also to be understood that the specific fibers and process steps illustrated in the attached drawings, and described in the following specification are exemplary embodiments of the inventive concepts defined in the appended claims. Hence, specific dimensions and other physical characteristics relating to the embodiments disclosed herein are not to be considered as limiting.

[0019] Definitions: The following definitions and terminology are commonly used in the art.

[0020] **Refractive index profile** - the refractive index profile is the relationship between the refractive index ($\Delta\%$) and the optical fiber radius (as measured from the centerline of the optical fiber) over a selected segment of the fiber.

[0021] **Relative refractive index percent $\Delta\%$** - the term $\Delta\%$ represents a relative measure of refractive index defined by the equation:

$$\Delta\% = 100 \times (n_i^2 - n_c^2) / 2n_i^2$$

where n_i is the maximum refractive index of the index profile segment denoted as i , and n_c , the reference refractive index. Every point in the segment has an associated relative index measured relative to the reference refractive index.

[0022] The optical waveguide fiber **20** in accordance with the embodiments of the present invention is a thermally stable PM fiber that utilizes one or more stress applying part(s) (herein referred to as a stress member) doped with F and less than 1 wt% of B. According to some embodiments the stress member comprises less than 0.5 wt% of B (boron). According to some embodiments the stress member comprises less than 0.1 wt% of B (boron). According to some embodiments the stress member(s) includes essentially no B. Applicants discovered that PM fibers with no boron (B), or with minimal amount of B have advantages over the PM fibers that includes a significant amount of B (e.g., $\geq 2\text{wt}\%$). These stress member(s) may have circular or non circular cross-sections, and may be utilized in many different types of fibers, for example: active (e.g., rare earth doped core) and passive fibers, and fibers that have one or more claddings of different materials (e.g., double clad fibers). Such optical fibers **20** provide polarization maintainance property via mechanical-stress, rather than thermal-stress seen in the traditional polarization maintaining PM fibers with B-only-doped silica as the SAPs (thermal stress-applying-part(s)). The mechanical stress achieved in the embodiments of the polarization maintaining (PM) optical fiber **20** is temperature-insensitive up to the strain-point of the F-doped-silica (material used for stress member(s)). Thus, optical fiber **20** is advantageously a very thermally stable PM-fiber. According to the embodiments described herein temperature-insensitive fiber PM **20** has (or exhibits) over the temperature range of -60°C to $+120^\circ\text{C}$:

1) changes in birefringence of the fiber Δn (refractive index difference between two polarization modes at the wavelength λ) of less than 10%, preferably less than 5%, and even more preferably less than 3% (but $>0\%$); and/or

2) changes in beat length L_b (where $L_b = \lambda / (2\pi\Delta n)$) of less than 10%, preferably less than 5%, and even more preferably less than 3% (but $>0\%$), where λ is the operating wavelength (e.g., 850 nm, 1060 nm, 1310 nm, and/or 1550 nm). It is noted that L_b can be measured by the wavelength scanning method, where the measured beat length $L_b = (\Delta\lambda/\lambda)L$

where $\Delta\lambda$ is the peak to peak wavelength, λ is the average wavelength, and L is the length of the measured fiber.

[0023] Two embodiments of the polarization maintaining optical waveguide fiber **20** in accordance with the invention described and disclosed herein have a cross-sectional structure, as best shown in **Figs. 2A and 2B**. In the illustrated embodiments, the optical waveguide fiber **20** includes a center core **30** extending along the longitudinal axis of the fiber. This core **30** may be either (i) circular (as shown in **Fig 2B**), with typical diameters between 3 and 12 microns, or (ii) elongated (e.g. elliptical, as shown in **FIG. 2A**) with a maximum dimension, A, and a minimum dimension, B. If the core **30** is elongated, it is preferable that the core **30** of the fiber **20** exhibits a first aspect ratio, AR1, defined as A/B, of greater than 1.5; preferably between about 1.5 and 8; more preferably between 2 and 5. The core **30** is surrounded by fiber cladding **40** which includes and/or surrounds at least one stress member **42**.

[0024] Central core **30** is manufactured, for example, from germania-doped silica, wherein germania is provided in a sufficient amount such that the core exhibits a core delta %, Δ_1 , between about 0.2 % and 2.5 % (GeO_2 doping between about 3.6wt% and 44wt%); for example preferably between about 0.3 % and 1% % (GeO_2 doping level between about 5.4wt% to 18 wt%); for example 0.3% to 0.5% (GeO_2 doping level between about 5.4wt% to 9 wt%), and in one embodiment about 0.34% (GeO_2 doping level about 6.2wt%). If the core is elongated, an average diameter, $d_{\text{avg}} = \{A+B\} / 2$, of the core **30** is preferably between about 3 and 12 microns; more preferably between 4 and 10 microns.

[0025] The at least one stress member is formed adjacent to the core **30** or in contact with the core (**Figs. 2A-2D**). For example, **Fig. 2C** illustrates a stress member **42** that is an annular region of fluorine doped silica surrounding the core. If the annular stress member **42** surrounds the core, the annular stress region may be circular (**Fig. 2C**), or oval (not shown)., A bow-tie-geometry stress member **42** surrounding the core (not shown) may also be utilized. Preferably, the amount of F in the stress member **42** is at least 1 wt%, for example 1 - 4 wt% (e.g., 1.5 wt% < F < 3.5 wt%), and the amount of B in the stress member is 0 to 1 wt% (e.g., <0.5 wt%, or <0.2 wt%, or <0.1 wt% or even <0.05 wt%).

[0026] The stress member(s) **42** may be a plurality of F doped stress rods **44, 46** (see, for example, **Figs. 2A, 2B, 2D, 4A and 4B**). Preferably the amount of F in the stress rods is at least 1 wt%, for example 1 - 4 wt% (e.g., $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$). These fluorine doped stress rods comprise less than 1 wt% of boron. According to some embodiments the stress rods **44, 46** comprise less than 0.5 wt% of boron, for example $< 0.2 \text{ wt}\%$, or even $< 0.1 \text{ wt}\%$, or $< 0.05 \text{ wt}\%$ of Boron. According to some embodiments the stress rods **44, 46** comprise less than 0.01 wt% of boron (i.e., 0 to 0.1 wt % B). According to some embodiments the stress rods include essentially no B. In some embodiments the stress rods **44, 46** contain no Boron. More specifically, **Figs. 2A, 2B and 2D** illustrate stress members that include at least two stress rods **44, 46** situated on opposite sides of the core **30**. If the fiber **20** includes the annular region **32**, the stress rods **44, 46** may be formed, at least in a part, in the annular region **32** of the fiber **20**. The stress rods **44, 46** preferably extend along the entire longitudinal length of the fiber **20**, and are preferably of substantially constant dimension along the fiber length. The stress rods **44, 46** are preferably positioned on diametrically opposite sides of the center core **30** and may be situated in the cladding **40** as shown in **Figs. 2A, 2B, or 2D**. The stress rods **44, 46** may be positioned adjacent to, and aligned with, the minimum core dimension B. The wall-to wall distance between the core and the stress rods can be zero (stress rods touching the core). Preferably the stress member, such as the stress rods **44, 46** are situated adjacent to and in very close proximity to the core **30** (for example, having a stress rod's edge located within 10 microns and preferably within 2-5 or 3-5 microns from the edge of core **30**). The stress rod cross-section may be circular (**Fig. 2A**), but may optionally be of other shapes (see, for example, **Fig. 2D and Figs 4A and 4B**) and may be of equal or non-equal size. In optical fibers **20** designed for standard single mode applications (e.g., fibers with outer diameter (OD) of 125 μm , the stress member(s) preferably have a maximum dimension, such as in diameter d or width w of between about 5 to 40 microns; more preferably between about 10 μm and 30 microns, for example 10 to 25 microns or 10 to 20 microns. According to some embodiments the stress rods have cross-section with an average diameter d_{av} , wherein $10 \mu\text{m} \leq d_{av} \leq 40 \mu\text{m}$. ($d_{av} = 1/2(D_{max} + D_{min})$) Although in these figures only one stress rod is shown on each side of the core **30**, multiple rods along each side may also provide PM within an operating wavelength band. An exemplary stress member comprising F doped silica may include $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$ and 0 to 0.1 wt% B.

For example, in some embodiments the stress member may include $2.4 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3 \text{ wt}\%$ and 0 to 0.05 wt% B. In some exemplary embodiments the amount of Boron in stress rods **42, 46** is between 0 to 0.01 wt%. The stress member(s) preferably have CTE which is similar to that of pure silica (or its surrounding doped-silica material) to secure a temperature insensitive PM performance within a temperature range of -100 °C to 600 °C. For example, the stress member(s) has a CTE preferably between $1 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $10 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$, and more preferably between $2 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $5 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$. In some embodiments the stress member (e.g., stress rods) has/have CTE of $3 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $5 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ within a temperature range of -100 °C to 600 °C.

[0027] Preferably, the optical fiber **20** supports polarization maintenance within an operating wavelength range situated between 800 nm and 1600 nm (e.g., 850 nm, 1060 nm, 1310 nm, and/or 1550 nm). The optical fibers **20** according to some embodiments of the present invention exhibit birefringence (measured as Δn) of 0.4×10^{-4} to 1×10^{-3} (e.g., 5×10^{-4} to 1×10^{-3}) at a wavelength situated within the 450 nm to 1600 nm band. In some embodiments the polarization maintaining fiber is a single mode fiber exhibiting birefringence of 0.4×10^{-4} to 10×10^{-4} at a wavelength of 450 nm to 1600 nm (e.g., at 1310 nm or 1550 nm). For example, the birefringence Δn may be between 1×10^{-4} to 3×10^{-4} at a wavelength of 1550 nm.

[0028] Fig. 3 shows the measured OSA spectrum vs. wavelength when the fiber of Fig. 2A is positioned between a pair of cross polarizers. Both birefringence (Δn) and beat length of this exemplary PM fiber (fiber of Fig. 2A) can be calculated by information provided in Fig. 3. This fiber has a measured beat length $L_b = (\Delta\lambda/\lambda)L$ of about 1.66 mm at 1550 nm, where $\Delta\lambda$ is the peak to peak wavelength spacing in Fig. 3, λ is the average wavelength, and L is the length of the measured fiber (In this embodiment $L=0.52 \text{ m}$). The fiber has birefringence Δn of about 9.3×10^{-4} at $\lambda=1550 \text{ nm}$, which is similar to that achievable in conventional PM fibers with B-only-doped-silica as stress member, but with the added benefit of being thermally-stable up to the strain-point (about 650 °C) for the F-silica glass.

[0029] One exemplary fiber **20** with a cross-section similar to that shown Fig. 2A has a single mode core (in this embodiment the core is circular) with relative refractive index delta of 0.34% and pure silica cladding. Thus, effective core-delta of 0.34% of the core relative to

the cladding corresponds to a core NA of about 0.12 in this PM fiber design. The stress rods have a delta of -0.45% (also relative to pure silica). This fiber embodiment has a core diameter of about 4.5 μm , and stress rod diameters of about 20-25 μm . The stress rods **44, 46** are situated within the cladding **40**, adjacent to the core **30**, with the distance (wall-to-wall, or edge-to-edge) between the core **30** and the stress rods **44, 46** of about 5 μm . This fiber **20** has a birefringence of 9.3×10^{-4} at $\lambda = 1.55 \mu\text{m}$. The fiber core **30** of this exemplary fiber comprises less than 7 wt% of GeO_2 . The cladding **40** of this exemplary fiber embodiment is comprised essentially of pure silica. The stress rods **44, 46** of this exemplary fiber comprise silica doped with 2.5 wt.% of F and less than 0.1 wt% of boron (e.g., essentially no boron).

[0030] According to some embodiments the radius of the stress rods is larger than the (edge to edge) distance between the core **30** and the stress rod **44 or 46** (See, for example, **Fig. 2B** where $c > (b-a/2)$). Preferably, the edge to edge distance between the core **30** and the stress rod **44 or 46** is smaller than the diameter of the core. For example, as shown in **Fig. 2B** the diameter of the core is **a**, and the distance between the core and the stress rods is **b-a/2**. This figure illustrates that **(b-a/2)** is less than **a**. In some embodiments the distance between the core edge and the edge of the stress rod(s) is less than 3 μm , and in some embodiments less than 2 μm . Also, see for example **Figs. 4A and 4B**.

[0031] According to one embodiment, we manufactured a polarization maintaining (PM) fiber **20** with Fluorine doped stress rods that have essentially no boron as follows:

[0032] A silica soot blank with 5000 g silica soot was prepared first by the outside vapor deposition (OVD) process. The post laydown soot density was 0.541 g/cm^3 . The diameter of the soot blank was 122 mm. A 30 cm long section of the soot blank was cut off. To provide adequate mechanical strength for drilling holes in the following step, the soot blank (in this embodiment 30 cm long) was pre-sintered at 1270°C for 3 hours in helium atmosphere to increase the density to about 1.0 g/cm^3 . After pre-sintering, the pre-sintered soot blank was drilled to provide a total of 3 holes- a central hole 9 mm in diameter and two holes with 18 mm in diameter on two sides of the central hole. A glass core cane of 8.5 mm was inserted into the central hole, and two Fluorine doped glass canes of 18 mm in diameter were inserted into the side holes. The core cane was made of Ge doped glass with delta of 0.34% (relative to pure silica) and a thin pure silica cladding surrounding the core region. The core/clad ratio (core diameter over cane diameter) was 0.975. The fluorine doped rods had delta of -0.45%

relative to pure silica, which corresponds to Fluorine concentration of 1.62 wt% and contained essentially no boron. Then the soot blank with the core cane and Fluorine doped rods was sintered in a furnace to form a sintered glass preform. The sintered glass preform was drawn into fibers of 125 μm and 100 μm diameters using a draw tower with 200 g draw tension.

[0033] Figs. 4A and 4B shows measured 2-D refractive index distributions for the two exemplary fiber embodiments (because these exemplary fibers are not circularly symmetric) manufactured by the above described exemplary method. More specifically these figures show cross-sectional areas of these fibers, with the grayscale bar on the right indicating the refractive index level. The maximal refractive index in the core is about 5×10^{-3} , which corresponds to a relative refractive index delta of 0.34% (relative to silica), and the minimal refractive index in the Fluorine stress rods is about 6.5×10^{-3} , which corresponds to a relative refractive index delta of 0.45% (relative to silica). For both fiber embodiments, the stress rods 44, 46 were deformed due to asymmetric stresses during the fiber draw and thus became non circular in cross-section. The core 30 becomes elliptical due to the asymmetrical mechanical stress from the fluorine doped stress rods. This elongated core increased further the birefringence of the optical fiber 20. Table 1 summarizes these fibers' parameters. The beat length L_b of the fiber embodiment with the 125 μm outer cladding diameter is 1.66 mm, which is similar to the PM fiber with purely Boron stress rods (shown in Fig 1). The fiber embodiment with the 100 μm outer cladding diameter has a longer beat-length than the 125 μm fiber.

Table 1. Measured optical parameter of the two PM fibers

Outer cladding diameter	125 μm diameter fiber	100 μm diameter fiber
Mode field diameter at 1310 nm (μm)	10.2	9.1
Mode field diameter at 1550 nm (μm)	11.3	10.4
2 m cutoff wavelength (nm)	1650	1208
Cable cutoff wavelength (nm)	1530	1080

Beat-length L_b (mm)	1.66	18.66
Birefringence	9.3×10^{-4}	0.8×10^{-4}
Attenuation at 1310 nm (dB/km)	0.49	1.3
Attenuation at 1550 nm (dB/km)	0.49	1.9

[0034] The discovery of utilization of the mechanical-stress induced birefringence of PM optical fibers **20** with F doped stress member(s) **42** or rods **44, 46** to control polarization properties of optical fibers provides unique advantages, such as lack of thermal sensitivity during operation. While not wishing to be bound by theory, applicants believe that mechanism of mechanically-induced high-birefringence provided by F -doped silica stress-member(s) can be explained as follows:

[0035] The general birefringence (Bi) achieved in the PM fiber that uses stress members **42** (stress rods **44, 46**) can be expressed as:

$$Bi = C \cdot (\sigma_t - \sigma_m), \quad (1)$$

where C is the stress-optical coefficient, σ_t is the thermal-stress contribution, and σ_m is the mechanical-stress contribution.

$$\sigma_t = \frac{2E\Delta\alpha\Delta T}{1-\nu} \quad (2)$$

and

$$\sigma_m = -F/A, \quad (3)$$

where E is the Young's modulus, $\Delta\alpha$ the differential-CTE between the stress member(s) and the cladding, ΔT temperature difference between fiber strain temperature and the room temperature, ν is Poisson's ratio, F is the fiber-drawing force, and A is the area of the stress member(s). The negative sign represents that the stress rods are in compression and the cladding of the fiber is in tension, which is the case of pure silica cladding. When silica glass is doped with other materials, both the refractive index and the coefficient of thermal expansion will change. For Fluorine dopant, Δ_F is related to the weight percent (W_F) by the following equations,

$$\Delta_F = -0.278 \times W_F \quad (4)$$

The index change for Fluorine doped glass is negative, which is suitable for stress rod application because it does not create a waveguide. The CTE α in the unit of $1/^\circ\text{C}$ is related to the molar percent by the following equation for the Fluorine doped silica,

$$\alpha_F(M_F) = \alpha_{\text{Silica}} - 2.337 \times 10^{-7} W_F \quad (5)$$

The CTE of Fluorine doped glass decreases slightly, which creates a small compressive stress in the stress rod region. Because the thermal stress is low, the preforms with Fluorine doped rods and less than 1 wt % of boron are easy to handle during the preform manufacturing process when they are heated up or cooled down. The fluorine doped stress rods less than 1 wt % of boron (and preferably less than 0.5% wt % boron, more preferably with less than 0.1% wt % boron, more preferably with less than 0.02 wt % of boron, and even more preferably 0 wt% to 0.01wt% boron) with lower viscosity than the silica cladding. When the preform is drawn into fiber, the draw tension is mostly taken by the silica cladding which results in tension in the fiber cladding and compression in the stress rods. The draw induced compression adds to the compression due to thermal expansion. Eq. (3) shows that the draw induced stress in the stress rods depends on the draw tension. To have high stress level in the stress rods, high draw tension is required. Preferably the draw tension is greater than 100 g, more preferably greater than 200 g, and even more preferably greater than 300 g. The draw induced mechanical stress is inversely proportional to the area of the stress rods. However, the birefringence induced in the core depends on the stress field inside the core, so there is an optimum diameter range for the stress rods. To increase the stress in the Fluorine doped stress rods 44, 46 while achieving minimum fiber attenuation high Fluorine doping level and very low amount of boron (and preferably no boron) is required to lower the viscosity of the rod's glass. Preferably the amount of Fluorine is greater than 1 wt%, more preferably greater than 2 wt%. Preferably the amount of boron (B) is less than 1 wt%, more preferably less than 0.5 wt%, even more preferable not greater than 0.1 wt % (e.g., (0.01 wt% or less)).

[0036] In conventional PM fibers with high-B-doped-silica as the stress member(s) such as those shown in FIG. 1, the thermal-term, σ_t , is the dominant factor contributing to the birefringence Bi . The thermal-stress term σ_t is driven largely by a large differential-CTE, $\Delta\alpha$. In fibers according to the exemplary embodiments herein, the mechanical-term, σ_m , is

comparatively small and generally can be ignored. That is, in conventional PM fibers $\sigma_t \gg \sigma_m$ (e.g., σ_t is at least 10 times larger than σ_m). In contrast, when the F-doped-silica with low amount of B (less than 1 wt %, preferably < 0.1 wt%), or more preferably with essentially no B is used as the stress member(s) **42, 44, 46** in the optical fibers **20**, the differential-CTE, $\Delta\alpha$, becomes small (almost nothing) and thus PM fibers **20** satisfy $\sigma_t \ll \sigma_m$ (e.g., σ_t is at least 10 times smaller than σ_m). In some embodiments, such F-doped-silica stress member(s) of optical fiber **20** has/have a CTE of about $2 \times 10^{-7}/^\circ\text{C}$ to $5 \times 10^{-7}/^\circ\text{C}$, as calculated from Equation 5, which is very similar to that of pure-silica glass. (CTE of silica is about $5.5 \times 10^{-7}/^\circ\text{C}$) Thus, the dominate force for the birefringence, B_i , as shown in equation (1), in the exemplary embodiments of the optical fibers **20** disclosed herein is almost totally the mechanical term, σ_m . The insensitivity of the σ_m to temperature, as shown in equation (3), is consequently responsible for the thermal-stability of the PM fiber made by using F-doped-silica stress member(s). According to some embodiments $\sigma_t \ll \sigma_m$ (e.g., $\sigma_t < 0.10\sigma_m$ or even $\sigma_t < 0.05\sigma_m$) results in thermally-insensitive operation of the optical fiber **20**. In some embodiments $0 \leq \sigma_t < 0.05\sigma_m$. Applicants realized that the boron, when present in the stress rods situated close to the fiber core, increases attenuation of the fiber (i.e., it increases the light loss due to the absorption of light by B present in the glass, so reducing the amount of B in stress rods below 1 wt%, or preferably eliminating it all together enables us to make low attenuation fibers. This reduction in B concentration allows us, without an increase in attenuation, to place the stress rods adjacent to, or close to the fiber core which increases birefringence and provides better polarization maintenance. In addition, boron, when present in glass, increases glass's thermal expansion coefficient (CTE), which increases the fiber's sensitivity to temperature changes. We discovered that by keeping the amount of B below 1%, and preferably less than 0.1%, or by not having B in the stress members or stress rods, improved the thermal stability of the PM fibers **20** described herein over a large temperature range (e.g., 100°C to 600°C).

[0037] A fiber cladding **40** preferably has a conventional outer diameter of about 125 microns or more and has a composition of preferably substantially pure silica. Optionally, the cladding **40** may include other suitable dopants, and the outer diameter may be reduced, if

size constraints so dictate. The optical fiber **20** preferably exhibits attenuation of less than 2 dB/km at operating wavelength (e.g., at 1550 nm, or at 1310 nm).

[0038] In some embodiments the optical fiber **20** exhibits attenuation of less than 0.5 dB/km at operating wavelength (e.g., at 1550 nm, or at 1310 nm). According to some embodiments the optical fiber **20** exhibits birefringence of 0.4×10^{-4} to 10×10^{-4} at a wavelength of 450 nm to 1600 nm. According to some embodiments the stress rods comprise $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$. According to some embodiments the stress member **42** or stress rod(s) **44, 46** have a cross-section with an average diameter d_{av} , wherein $10 \mu\text{m} \leq d_{av} \leq 40 \mu\text{m}$. According to some embodiments the stress rods has/have CTE of $2 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $5 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ within temperatures of -100 °C to 600°C. Preferably, the stress member or stress rods has/have less than 0.01 wt% B. In these embodiments $0 \leq \sigma_t < 0.1 \sigma_m$. In some embodiments, $0 \leq \sigma_t < 0.05 \sigma_m$.

[0039] It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that variations and modifications can be made to the present invention without departing from the scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover the modifications and variations of this invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A polarization maintaining optical fiber comprising:
 - (i) a core;
 - (ii) a cladding surrounding the core; and
 - (iii) at least one stress member adjacent the core and situated within the cladding, said at least one stress member comprising fluorine (F) doped silica with 0 to 1wt% of boron (B).
2. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the core is silica based and is surrounded by said at least one stress member, said at least one stress member being an annular region of F doped silica.
3. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, wherein said at least one stress member includes at least two stress rods situated on opposite sides of said core.
4. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, 2, or 3 comprising an attenuation of less than 2 dB/km at an operating wavelength between 800 nm and 1600 nm.
5. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, 2, or 3 comprising an attenuation of less than 0.5 dB/km at an operating wavelength between 800 nm and 1600 nm.
6. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of any one of the preceding claims, said fiber being a single mode polarization maintaining fiber and comprising a birefringence of 0.4×10^{-4} to 10×10^{-4} at a wavelength λ situated between 450 nm and 1600 nm.
7. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of any one of the preceding claims, wherein said at least one stress member has $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$.
8. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 3 or 7, wherein said at least two stress rods have a cross-section with an average diameter d_{av} , wherein $10 \text{ }\mu\text{m} \leq d_{av} \leq 40 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$.
9. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, said fiber being a single mode polarization maintaining fiber, wherein said at least one stress member comprises two F doped silica rods with $1.5 \text{ wt}\% < F < 3.5 \text{ wt}\%$ and 0 wt% to 0.5 wt% of B.

10. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 1, said fiber being a single mode polarization maintaining fiber, wherein said at least one stress member comprises two F doped silica rods with essentially no B.
11. The polarization maintaining optical fiber according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said at least one stress member has CTE of $2 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $5 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ within temperatures of -100°C to 600°C .
12. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 10, wherein said two F doped stress rods have a CTE of $2 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $5 \times 10^{-7}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ at temperatures between -100°C and 600°C .
13. The polarization maintaining optical fiber according to any of the preceding claims wherein said at least one stress member has a thermal stress coefficient σ_t and a mechanical stress coefficient σ_m , and wherein $\sigma_t < 0.1 \sigma_m$.
14. A polarization maintaining optical fiber comprising:
- (i) a core;
 - (ii) a cladding surrounding the core; and
 - (iii) at least one stress member adjacent the core and situated within the cladding, said at least one stress member comprising silica doped with fluorine (F) and 0 to 1 wt% boron (B), wherein said at least one stress member has a thermal stress coefficient σ_t and a mechanical stress coefficient σ_m , and wherein $\sigma_t < 0.1 \sigma_m$.
15. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 14, wherein the core is silica based and the at least one stress member comprises 1wt% to 4 wt% F.
16. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 14, wherein the core is silica based and the at least one stress member either: (i) includes at least two stress rods situated on opposite sides of said core; or (ii) surrounds said core.

17. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of any of the preceding claims wherein said at least one stress member has less than 0.01 wt% B.
18. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 14, wherein said core is silica based; and the stress member includes at least two stress rods situated on opposite sides of said core, and said stress rods comprise $1\text{wt}\% < F < 4\text{ wt}\%$.
19. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 18, wherein said stress rods comprise less than 0.05 wt% B.
20. The polarization maintaining optical fiber of claim 18, wherein said stress rods comprise less than 0.01 wt% B.

FIG. 1

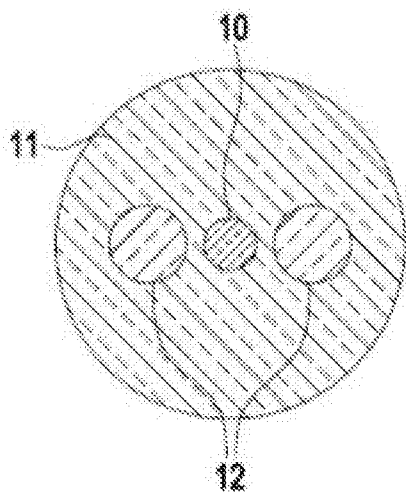


FIG. 2A

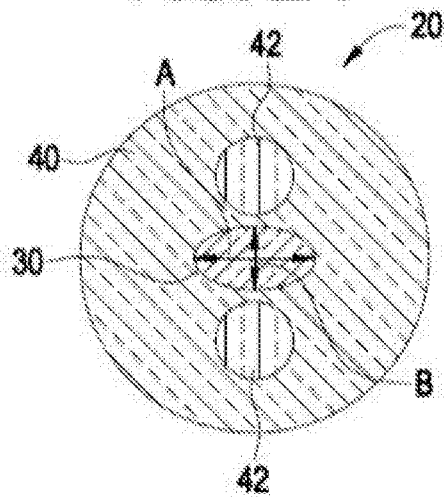


FIG. 2B

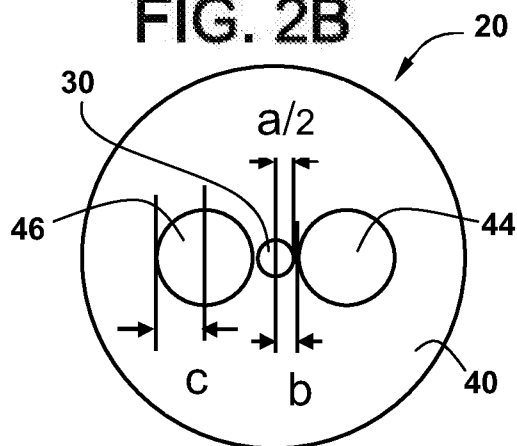


FIG. 2C

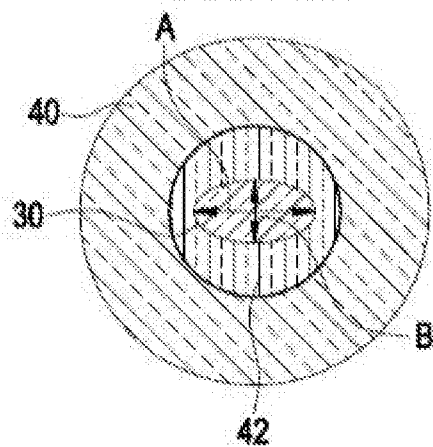
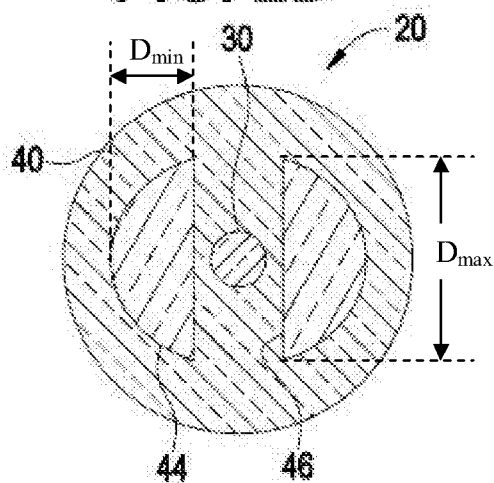
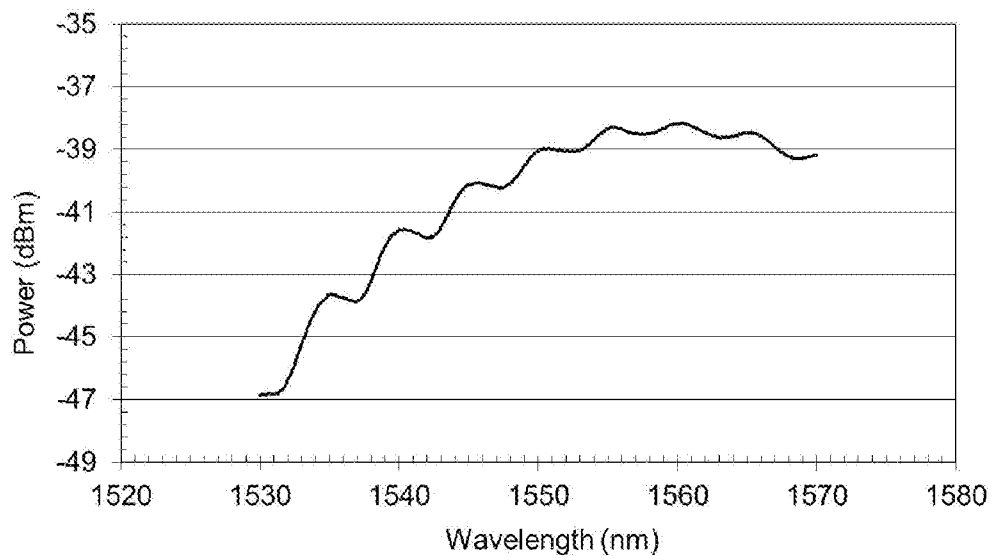


FIG. 2D



2/4

**FIG. 3**

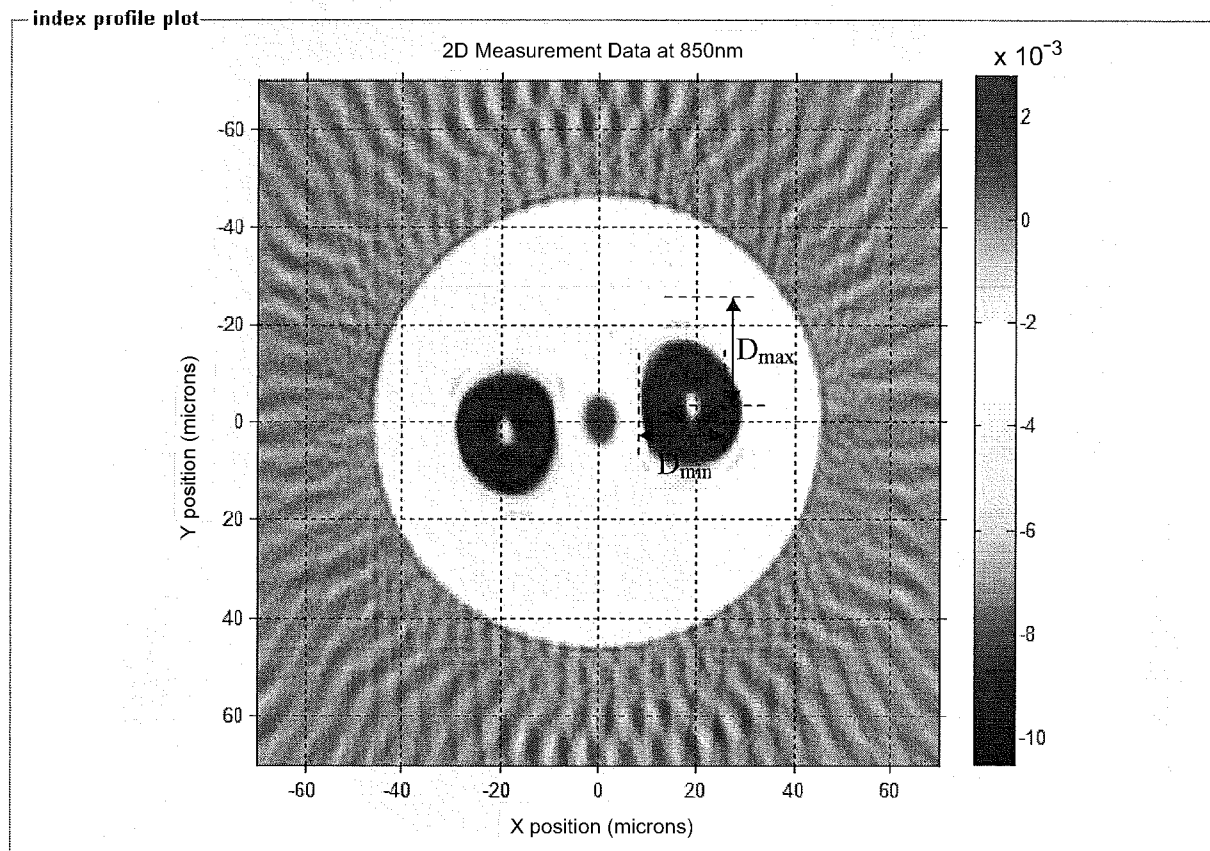


FIG. 4A

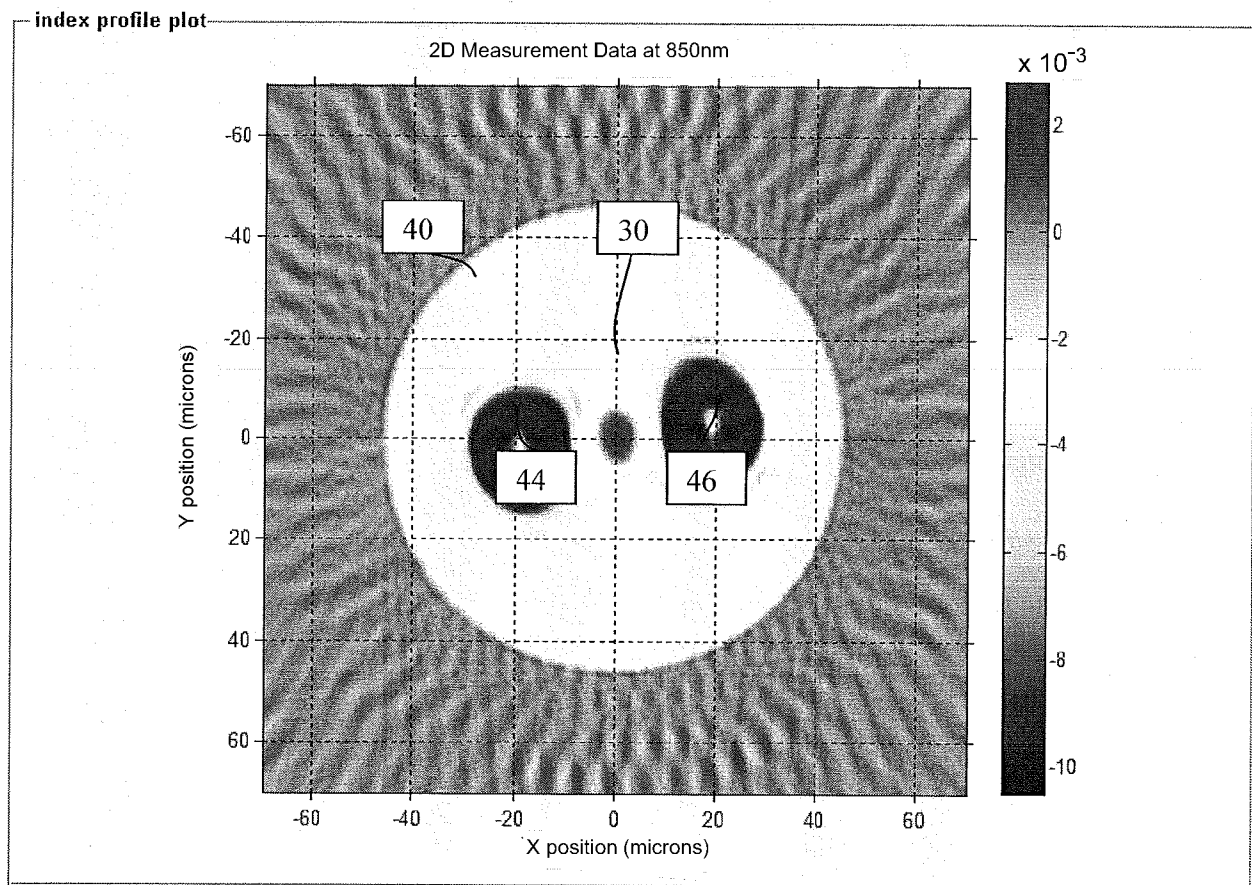


FIG. 4B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 16/22446

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - G02B 6/02, G02B 6/00 (2016.01)

CPC - G02B 6/024, C03B 2203/31, C03B 2201/08, C03B 2201/14, C03B 2203/10, G02B 6/02333

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
CPC - G02B6/024, C03B2203/31, C03B2201/08, C03B2201/14, C03B2203/10, G02B6/02333
IPC(8) - G02B6/02, G02B 6/00 (2016.01)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
CPC - G02B6/024, C03B2203/31, C03B2201/08, C03B2201/14, C03B2203/10, G02B6/02333
IPC(8) - G02B6/02, G02B6/00 (2016.01); USPC - 385/123, 385/141

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

Patbase; Google Web, Google Patent

Search terms used: fiber stress polarization fluorine boron core cladding member rod element proton section single mode attenuation
OTC attenuation surround annular

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2009/0060435 A1 (CHEN et al.) 05 March 2009 (05.03.2009), para [0003], [0006]-[0008], [0025], [0028], [0035], [0037]; claim 5	1-5, 9, 10, 12, 14-16, 18-20
A	US 2009/0080843 A1 (BOOKBINDER et al.) 26 March 2009 (26.03.2009), entire document	1-5, 9, 10, 12, 14-16, 18-20
A	US 2007/0177846 A1 (CHEN et al.) 02 August 2007 (02.08.2007), entire document	1-5, 9, 10, 12, 14-16, 18-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

16 May 2016 (16.05.2016)

Date of mailing of the international search report

26 MAY 2016

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Facsimile No. 571-273-8300

Authorized officer:

Lee W. Young

PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300

PCT OSP: 571-272-7774

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 16/22446

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☒ Claims Nos.: 6-8, 11, 13, 17
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.